A case study of ESL high school students' perceptions of their experiences: Identifying language minority students' support needs in a diverse classroom.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored ESL high school students’ academic and social support needs from their perspectives as well as those of their teachers. Data was collected through focus group student interviews, and one-on-one teacher interviews. This data was then categorized into the following major themes: 1) learning preferences/teaching strategies, 2) benefits of ESL program, 3) academic and social integration, 4) accomplishments and challenges, 5) attitude and ambitions. Findings indicated: 1) initial isolation, and double integration challenge, 2) benefits of the school’s multicultural environment, 3) shortage of ESL support, 4) benefits of peer-tutoring and 5) ideal class size of 14. Respondents also commented that the school needs more ESL related curriculum, a computer language laboratory, funding for extra and intra-curricular activities, peer-tutoring sessions, more ESL qualified teachers, and financial support for ESL training. The study recommended alternative approaches to traditional mainstream ESL models, as well as identified ways of teaching and integrating ESL students into the Canadian educational system and society.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to people interested in research, development, and application in the field of second language education as well as the professors I have met during my experience in the Master's of Education program. Most of all, my thesis is dedicated to the English second language student participants and other ESL students whose voices have not yet been heard.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special acknowledgements to the study’s participants that included the school board for permitting this research, the generous principal for approving the proposed study, the teacher participants for their precious time, professional knowledge, and useful feedback. Most importantly, I would like to thank the school’s ESL students for providing valuable and crucial insights into their world and perceptions that guided my paper’s major components.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of Study

Canadian immigration history can be traced back to the late 19th century when between 1896 and 1905 agricultural immigrants arrived in Canada, particularly, in the prairies, from the U.S., Britain, and Northern Europe (Macaluso, 2005). In the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, the first European settlers were the French and the English. Later, immigrants arrived from Western, Eastern, then Southern Europe, and beginning in the 1960’s from Asia, Africa, and Latin America comprising of approximately 2.8 million immigrants from new origin countries (Cummins, 1997; Ghosh, 2002; Jakubowski, 2002). In the early 1990’s, 250,000 of immigrants arrived in Canada annually and figures from 1996 and 1997 are estimated at about 220,000 (Cummins, 1997).

Recently, according to the 2001 census data from Statistics Canada, out of the 29,639,035 total Canadian population, only 17,352,315 (58.5%) people speak English as their native language, 6,703,325 (23%) speak French as their native language, and the rest of the population identify their mother tongue as another non-official language. This means that 5,583,395 (19%) of Canadians speak a language other than English or French. In Ontario, the most populous province, out of 11,285,550 people, only 7,965,225 (71%) are native English speakers, 485,630 (4.3%) native French and the rest of Ontario’s population speaks another language (2,834,695 =25% of people).

As researched by Statistics Canada 2001, this study’s city is nationally in fourth place (after Hamilton in third place, Vancouver in second, and Toronto in first) with its
foreign-born population per capita. Specifically, in the south-western city, from which
the participants of this study were interviewed, and its surrounding area, the growing
population is now at 304,955. Out of this increasing population, 73 % (220,380) of
people identify themselves as native speakers of English, 12,930 (4.3%) are French
speakers, and the rest of 67,210 (22%) people belong to the following language minority
groups: Italian 12,335 (18%), Arabic 8,600 (13%), Chinese (includes Cantonese,
Mandarin, Hakka, and others) 4,865 (7.2%), Polish 3,950 (5.9%), Spanish 2,525 (3.8%),
German 2,510 (3.7%), Tagalog (Pilipino) 1,820 (2.7%), Punjabi 1,665 (2.4%),
Vietnamese 1,525 (2.3%), Greek 1,455 (2.2%), Ukrainian 1,155 (1.7%), Portugese 575
(0.9%), Dutch 490 (0.7%), and other non-official languages 23,740 (35%) (see Figure
1.1 below).

As seen from the above information, there is an urgent need to explore the
integration of local ethnic minorities into the school environment. The study will
therefore explore how this recent diverse population change is recognized in our local
educational system through the views of immigrant students and their teachers. The rest
of this chapter will therefore focus on the problem, purpose, research questions, and
relevance of the study.

Figure 1.1 (Statistics Canada Census, 2001)
Linguistic Minorities in the Study Community

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General Statement of the Problem

As seen from the previous statistical data, various cultures and language speakers are present in today's schools. This population shift has had tremendous impact on schools, created challenges for educators, especially teachers, and needs to be addressed in school curricula and implemented in the classroom. The ethnic, cultural, and linguistic composition change of our students has resulted in a wider range of educational values and affected classroom pedagogy. Past teaching methodologies that targeted only culturally homogenous groups of children are no longer acceptable and therefore should be adapted to accommodate the needs and different learning styles of students who come from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.

Unfortunately, despite the increasing number of immigrants arriving in Canada, there has been a decrease in educational budgets for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and instruction. For example, school boards hire fewer qualified ESL teachers and assume that ESL students will succeed by integrating them into the mainstream classroom and curricula (Myers, 2003). However, many classroom teachers are unprepared to properly integrate the needs of ESL students into their regular lessons. These are crucial social needs that lead to successful integration into the Canadian society, including the workforce. These needs include language skills that enable ESL students not only to acquire basic oral communication skills, but also to become proficient in written language focusing on accuracy and academic skills for higher education. In today's world, basic communication skills in the English language are a minimum requirement in order to be successful with a high paying job. An in depth analysis of ESL students' current academic needs and preferences must be addressed in
order to make appropriate changes. School policies and practices need to be re-examined. ESL, bilingual education and other services need to promote, rather than limit, educational opportunities for all students.

Purpose of the Study

Although there is research that has examined the needs of ESL students, most of the existing studies focus on ESL education in teacher training programs and not on existing programs in the public school system (Gromely et al., 1994; Schick & Boothe, 1995). Information regarding ESL approaches and patterns is becoming more widespread. Existing research focuses on ESL theories; whereas, there is little practical research on ESL approaches, materials, and organizational patterns. Very few studies have also examined the views of ESL students from their own perspectives.

The purpose of this case study is to identify high school ESL students' needs, examine teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity, as well as determine which instructional approaches are successful in teaching ESL. Most importantly, the study was also designed to find out ESL students' perceptions of their learning experiences and see if their academic and social needs are being met in their overall school environment. The aim of this study is to gain insights that can lead to further research as well as guide practice in the field of ESL education. Canada’s official Multicultural Policy defines “language minority” as French minority speakers in an officially English speaking province, or English language minority speakers in an officially French speaking province. However, for the purpose of this study, the concept of “linguistic diversity” or “language minority” will be generally defined as and referred to students whose first language is any other than English.
Research Questions

As stated earlier, given the growing minority population, there is an urgent need for research that examines how schools are meeting the language needs of immigrant children. The study set out to accomplish this objective based on the following research questions:

1. What are ESL high school students’ perceptions of their learning experiences in and outside of their ESL classrooms?
2. What approaches to ESL instruction are teachers currently using in the participating school and what are teachers’ perceptions of linguistic diversity?
3. Are there significant differences between the perceptions of ESL students and those of their teachers?
4. What are the academic and social needs of minority language students?

Significance of the Study

An examination of the related literature shows that although the ethnic, cultural, and in particular, linguistic composition of students in Canadian schools have changed significantly, there remains a need for finding ways of integrating the academic needs of ESL students into the curriculum and teaching practices. As Cummins (2000) points out, traditional teaching methods only targeted culturally homogenous groups of children and should therefore be adjusted to suit the contemporary contexts of linguistic diversity.

Given the limitations of current approaches, the study identified (through the views of the students and teachers) more innovative ways of teaching ESL students. Moreover, the study is of significant benefit to teachers and administrators since it provides alternative approaches to traditional mainstreaming or pull-out classes, such as
transitional ESL programs. Most importantly, insights gleamed from the study facilitate ESL students’ successful integration into the public education system and ultimately, into the Canadian society.

Definition of Terms

Anti-racist education:
Began in Britain in the 1960’s and has been implemented in two Canadian provinces, Ontario and British Columbia. Focuses on structural and individual discrimination (particularly racism and its intersection with class and gender) and on social reconstruction, which seeks society based on equality and social justice (Ghosh, 2002).

Assimilation (Theory)
This is a process in which people of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds come to interact, free of constraints, in the life of the larger dominant community. It is a one-way process through which members of a subordinate ethnic group give up their original culture and are absorbed into the core culture, which predominates in the host society (Bennett, 2003).

Bilingual Education
The instruction in two languages and the use of those languages as mediums of instruction in school curricula. Study of the history and culture associated with a student’s mother tongue is considered an integral part of bilingual education (Anderson, 1976).

Cultural Pluralism
A process of compromise characterized by mutual appreciation and respect between two or more cultural groups (Bennett, 2003).
Diversity

A concept that acknowledges and advances the multiplicity and equality of ethnocultural, linguistic, religious, and “racial” differences. (Dr. Cheran’s definition).

Diversity Perspective

It is an awareness, openness to and acceptance of other cultural viewpoints, lifestyles and traditions. This perspective is composed of a positive and multicultural attitude as opposed to an ethnocentric one (own definition).

ESL (English as a Second Language)

The teaching of English to speakers of other languages in settings where either English is the medium of instruction in the schools, the media (television, radio, and newspapers), and the language of the majority, or where English has been designated as an official language of governments and education (Nixon, 1991).

ESL students’ needs

A well designed ESL syllabus, updated materials, consistent assessment measures, more experienced personnel, more resources, and better prepared professionals (Lopes, 1997).

Ethnocentric

Relating to or holding the belief that one’s own cultural tradition or racial group is superior to all others (All Words, 2005 http://www.allwords.com/word-ethnocentricity.html).

Linguistic Diversity

A concept referring to a person’s linguistic background and language skills, specifically, in native or second language and/or in any other acquired languages other than English (own definition).
Mainstreaming (Approach)

The placement of ESL students into "regular" classrooms, either for one class or for the whole day, creating a theoretical “inclusive” environment for the student; however, may result in ESL students’ isolation (own definition).

Multicultural Education

Sometimes referred to as multiethnic education or anti-racist education used by countries all over the world in referring to educational efforts that have attempted to inculcate more positive values about human pluralism and improve the learning potential for all students (Banks, 1997).

Even though, many significant contributions to educational reform concerning language minority students and their overall integration have been considered and implemented, such as anti-racist, bilingual, and multicultural education, there is still a need to explore more issues about linguistic diversity and ESL students. The next chapter will review literature concerning the broader perspectives of ESL education.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review section will begin with an introduction of Canadian multicultural policies then explore linguistics and language learning theories, followed by academic literacy instructional techniques, continue with second language acquisition theories relating to socio-cultural factors, finally, explore ESL teaching methodologies, and overview related research studies. Below is a conceptual map illustrating the main literature sections and their essential components, which will comprehensively be discussed in this chapter.

Figure 2.1: The Literature Review
The main research questions that guided the following comprehensive literature review were: What are the academic and social needs of minority language students? What are ESL high school students' perceptions of their learning experiences in and outside of their ESL classrooms?

2.1 Canada’s Educational Multicultural Policies

Canada is the first country to have a multicultural policy (Ghosh, 2002). Since the beginning of the 21st century, 46% of Canada’s population belongs to an ethnic group other than English or French. There exists about 25% of French Canadians who reside primarily in Quebec, while only 29% of Canadians are of British origin. From a national perspective, Saskatchewan was the first Canadian province to implement the multicultural policy. Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have made efforts to preserve minority languages in education and offer bilingual instruction in native Cree, French, Ukrainian, Russian, German, and Hebrew. Nova Scotia also has a well-developed intercultural policy. Finally, the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario have the largest non-white populations. British Columbia has a large Asian population while Ontario attracts almost 50% of immigrants (Ghosh, 2002). In fact, according to Duffy (2003), Ontario has one of the largest growing immigrant populations in the world. In 2001, three million Ontarians have identified themselves as immigrants. Because of its growing international population, Ontario has adopted numerous multicultural policies and acts. They include the establishment and implementation of a multicultural policy in 1977 and more recently, anti-racist policy, the policy on Race and Ethnocultural Equity in 1987, and the Antiracist and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards policy in 1993. In addition, Ontario’s amendments to the educational act in 1992 require school boards to
implement anti-racism and ethnocultural policies, which include various programs on race relations, student placement, recruitment of teachers, curriculum, school/community relations, and heritage language programs (Ghosh, 2002).

Currently, the Canadian society consists of a multicultural “mélange”, where cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity is an advantage not just for society, but also in the educational system. Because Canadian multiculturalism creates a diverse student body, it is crucial to explore the linguistic framework as well as the social and cultural dynamics of language learning in order to appreciate the experiences of minority students and clearly identify their academic and social needs.

These next sub-categories of the literature review will explore theoretical frameworks of linguistics, first and second language acquisition with practical language learning and teaching strategies used in the ESL classroom. Socio-cultural factors of second language acquisition will also be explored. Related studies will also be addressed. Through this comprehensive review of literature, an overall perspective on language acquisition theory and practice will be developed, especially in English as a second language instruction, in order to realize the significance, necessity and depth of this field related research and its practical implications in the local community.

2.2 Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theories

Following is an overview of some of the most classical theorists who ignited the classroom debate whether or not language learning and literacy skills are acquired or learned in the surrounding environment or if these learning skills are already innate waiting to be triggered. These theorists include Noam Chomsky, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky.
The nature of language acquisition and the development of literacy skills have been an on-going debate in language theories and modern teaching practices. According to historical literature, many linguists address how first language literacy skills are developed in order to enhance them in any additional language. Chomsky’s (1980) theory of a “universal grammar”, also referred to as a “fixed nucleus” or a “fixed cognitive structure” (p. 64), is composed of an intrinsic language acquisition system and determines the standard form for all grammars that humans are capable of learning, while his “ignition key” hypothesis states that the primary linguistic data determines the language to which the learner is exposed. Meaning that the structure of the primary language does not resemble the structure of the language acquisition device, but this primary language only “switches on” the “ignition key” or the language acquisition device without manipulating its internal structure. In other words, the number of languages a person learns does not interfere with the internal language acquisition device (L.A.D.) system where more than one “grammar” exists depending on how many languages a person speaks. Linguistic input determines which language or grammar in the language acquisition device the learner is being exposed to and consequently creates the appropriate linguistic output after that specific language structure is processed through the (L.A.D.) system (Chomsky, 1980) (see Figure 2.1 below). Therefore, it is critical for language learners to first master literacy skills in their native language in order for their L.A.D. to grammatically process the linguistic input and output of that language. Once the initial or first language is processed through the LAD, it makes it easier for any
additional linguistic input to be processed as second or third or fourth, etc. language output (second, third, etc. language).

**Figure 2.2: The mind vs. the world diagram** (adapted from Hale & Kissock, 2001).

```
1) acoustic 2) acoustic* 3) mental 4) THE 5) interpretation
signal processor representation GRAMMAR of acoustic signal

acoustic signal (9) <- articulatory 8) <- output 7) <- THE 6) <
system of grammar GRAMMAR (mental representation)
```

* green = the BODY & the WORLD  
* blue = the MIND

- two functions of the grammar (LAD) exist: generation of output and analysis of input
- the arrows leading into the grammar indicate the processing of input data, the arrows leading away from the grammar indicate the process of generation of spoken output

Chomsky (1980) also introduces a distinction between “competence” and “performance” in the primary or any additional language where the former refers to the speaker’s knowledge of the language and the latter to the speakers’ actual use of it (p.15).

In a second language classroom, students may acquire more linguistic input; the actual knowledge of the language, than they are capable of producing as output; its actual use.

Therefore, acquiring literacy or second language skills and being successful in the output or production of the language learning process is a long journey where students and teachers need patience, development, and practice. Teachers need to be aware of this process and have the appropriate teaching skills and techniques in order to create a successful language-learning environment (Meeks & Jewkes, 2003). Teachers also need
to have high expectations for students and increase motivation in language learners by being aware of the theoretical process and the amount of time involved in language learning. However, as Short & Echavaria (2005) state, many content-area teachers including in the field of language arts, do not have sufficient knowledge of the language acquisition process or training in second language teaching methodologies.

**Piaget and Vygosky**

As Chomsky falls into the innatists' theories where fixed natural structures such as the language acquisition device increase the language learning process, Piaget (1977) is an empiricist and believes in pragmatic theories of general intelligence, for example, from where the knowledge of mathematics and languages develop. Vygotsky (1962) states that Piaget believes in an assimilatory scheme that is either acquired or innate. According to Piaget (as cited by Vygotsky, 1962), egocentric speech precedes socialized speech; therefore, inner speech must also precede socialized speech. However, Vygotsky believes that the first and earliest stage of the child's speech is social since the primary function of a child's speech is to communicate for social contact. At a certain age the child's social speech is divided into egocentric and communicative (or socialized).

Vygotsky's view helped to develop the communicative theory of language acquisition, which favours fluency rather than grammatical accuracy. This dichotomy has been an ongoing debate in second language teaching. Nevertheless, in the modern second language classroom, the communicative approach is preferred and practised.

Vygotsky (1962) identifies another interesting phase on language literacy skills, which he calls "naïve psychology" (p. 46), where the child uses correct grammatical structures before understanding the logistics behind them. This theory can be applied to...
language learners as they develop speech syntax before thought syntax. For example, children, or literacy or language learners may use clauses such as if, because, when, and but before they actually comprehend their conditional or causal grammatical functions. The child grasps the external structure of word-object earlier than the inner symbolic structure. A language student also masters the functional use of a sign rather than its internal structure. Therefore, “thought and speech develop along separate lines; however, these lines meet at a certain point (p.50)”. This is also a crucial reason why second language or language arts teachers should explicitly explain grammatical functions of syntactic structures such as different forms of verbs (state vs. action), subjects (people/things), or objects (things/people) since students already use them in their speech output without completely understanding their grammatical significance.

Vygotsky relates thought development in this phase of “naïve psychology” to socio-cultural factors. A child’s intellect grows as social meanings of thought are mastered into language. A historical-cultural process determines verbal thought production, rather than an innate form of behaviour. In other words, thought and language develop because of social and historical psychology rather than natural science. To highlight this significance in a practical language classroom, teachers should pay attention to how they socialize their language learners while creating a successful and comfortable language-learning environment. The effect of socio-cultural factors on second language acquisition will be further discussed in the second language learning section of this literature review.

The above theoretical background on linguistics and language learning brings to our attention, as educators, the complexity of language acquisition and the language
learning process. Some of our recent ESL students may not even be literate in their first language, which will triple their task of successful integration. First, is the issue of being a non-native speaker and therefore, developing English language skills, second, trying to simultaneously develop academic skills, and third, struggling with underdeveloped or nonexistent literacy skills in their native language. The following section in the literature review will therefore discuss how teachers can help students in developing successful literacy and English academic skills.

2.3 Developing Academic Literacy Skills

Teachers' techniques and appropriate skills are crucial in developing a successful literacy and language-learning environment. There are many factors and methodologies used to develop literacy and English academic language skills. These include guided reading and writing techniques, as well as vocabulary development, which will be explored in the following section of this chapter.

One question that emerges in a literacy or second language classroom is “how do students learn to read?” Specific reading comprehension strategies are recommended for novice and second language learners. Brown (2001), suggests the following classroom techniques to increase reading comprehension skills: identifying the purpose in reading, using phonetics and pronunciation symbols to aid decoding words, using efficient reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension (for example, academic reading), skimming the text for main ideas, scanning the text for specific information, using semantic mapping or clustering, guessing and inferring meaning or content, analyzing vocabulary, distinguishing between literal and implied meanings, and guessing relationships between meaning and transitional words. Meeks & Jewkes (2003) describe...
guided reading as an important strategy in a reading program, especially for novice
readers. It involves the teacher or another expert reader guiding the students through
texts while modelling meaning identification strategies and showing how to explore
language features.

A second related question is “how do students learn to write?” Meeks & Jewkes
(2003) also describe how guided writing develops literacy with models of fluent writing.
As in guided reading, an expert models the process of thinking and shows the strategies
of a writer or a reader. The main difference in guided writing from process writing is that
students are guided through various writing processes as many times as they need.
Guided writing begins with the teacher modelling the writing process and ends with the
students taking over the demonstrations. Students then share their own writing and read
their peers’ writing while achieving student empowerment. Brown (2001) believes that
guided writing, as an intensive and controlled writing technique, should be used as “a
production mode for learning, reinforcing, or testing grammatical concepts” (p. 344).
Specifically, guided writing offers a series of stimulators, for example, the teacher may
ask students to summarize a story they have just viewed in class. Another form of
controlled or guided writing suggested by Brown (2001) would be to give a paragraph to
students in which they have to change a given grammatical structure from the past tense
to the present tense, for example. A dictation is another type of controlled or guided
writing, where the teacher reads a paragraph once or twice at normal speed and asks the
students to rewrite it according to their best recollection. This type of writing strategy not
only helps in writing technique but also develops vocabulary and listening
comprehension skills.
Short & Echevarria (2005) give suggestions on how teachers can promote English language learners’ academic literacy. Specifically, these instructional techniques are to identify language demands of the content course and plan explicit language objectives for all lessons. For example, teachers can develop objectives related to key vocabulary, reading, or writing skills, listening or speaking tasks, or language structures. Further, teachers should emphasize academic vocabulary development by using pre-reading and pre-writing activities, such as previewing the text chapter by examining the section headings and illustrations, or sentence starters and graphic organizers to record ideas on a topic. When developing academic vocabulary, teachers should also use connective expressions such as in comparison, and as a result. Other techniques include: activating and strengthening background knowledge, promoting oral interaction and extended academic talk, reviewing vocabulary and content concepts, and giving students feedback on language use in class, for example, talking explicitly with students about word choice or comparing information and techniques for explaining solutions (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

According to Short & Echevarria (2005), high quality instruction makes a difference in English language learner’s academic success. Systematic language development provides students with academic literacy skills they need to succeed in mainstream classes, and also helps them meet content standards and pass standardized examinations. The authors believe that by having the appropriate training, teachers can help English language learners succeed in school by developing literacy skills and mastering academic content.
2.4 Second Language Learning and Acquisition: Theories and Socio-cultural Factors

Theories

As reviewed in the previous literature sections, it is important for educators to understand the complexity of linguistics, including first language acquisition, and develop suitable academic literacy techniques for language learners. It is also as crucial for us to comprehend second language learning. Second language learning and acquisition is a relatively modern and complex concept that has captured the attention of many linguists, including the language acquisition theorist, Stephen Krashen. As stated in Meeks & Jewkes (2003), Krashen identifies learning as a process where the teachers or students break down knowledge into consciously learnable parts. This means learning the rules and understanding grammar. Krashen also explains the term acquisition as an unconscious exposure to knowledge without any formal teaching and compares acquisition to how infants acquire fluency in their native language; by being immersed into the language and forcing it to meet their needs. This theory is significant in second language learning since it can be applied to language immersion schools, for example French immersion in Ontario, where students' linguistic acquisition needs are believed to be met through the assimilation process into the overall school environment.

More specifically, Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition is composed of five different hypotheses (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002; Lightbown & Spada 2000). These are: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. In the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the difference between acquisition and learning occurs when adult second language learners acquire the language as they are exposed to it in their
surrounding environment for the purpose of fluency and communication. On the other hand, learning the language involves explicitly studying language rules and grammatical functions for the purpose of accuracy rather than fluency. Krashen believes that acquisition is a far more important process since many speakers become fluent without ever learning the rules, while others who learn specific rules fail to apply them as they focus on what they are saying rather than on how they are saying it (Lightbown & Spada 2000). However, many grammarians argue that in order for students to successfully acquire a language, they first need to learn a formal structured base, which focuses on grammar and syntax.

Krashen’s second hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, focuses on accuracy. Second language learners use this monitor when they are focused on being correct rather than on the content of what they wish to say. Writing, therefore, is more favourable to speaking, in terms of monitoring language use, as it involves more concentration and time (Krashen, 1982 as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2000).

Krashen’s the third hypothesis explains that language is acquired in a predictable natural order. However, rules that are easier to learn (or to state) are not the easiest to acquire (Lightbown & Spada 2000). For example, many advanced English second language speakers continuously make the error of not applying the third person singular -s verbs in the present tense in conversation or writing even though they have studied it.

The input hypothesis states second language learners acquire language by understanding messages rather than focusing on form (Krashen, 1985 as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002). Comprehensible input is input with language structures and forms that are just one level beyond the learner’s competence in that specific language.
However, the learner must already be exposed to and have basic knowledge of that language beforehand (Lightbown & Spada 2000). For example, as a language learner attempts to listen to a Finnish radio station with no prior exposure to or knowledge of the language, it would be impossible to understand any words or main ideas (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002). Comprehensible input involves simple language with a focus on communication rather than accuracy. In a classroom setting this would include shorter sentences, restricted vocabulary, slower speech, and including other second language acquisition methodologies such as using visual aids and paraphernalia.

Krashen’s last theoretical hypothesis is based on a concept of an affective filter. This filter is an imaginary barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language because of specific psychological factors such as: anxiety, motivation, stress, self-confidence, or self-conscience, and attitude (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002; Lightbown & Spada 2000). In the practical classroom setting, this explains why some learners succeed while others fail when the same learning opportunity is given to all of them. Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis is popular amongst other second language acquisition researchers. Other psychological factors that affect individual learning can be related to Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis. These include aptitude, motivation, learning strategies, intelligence, age, sex, self-esteem, cooperation, and pedagogical implications (Oxford, 1992, Skehan, 1989 as cited in Su-Ja Kang, 2006). Some of these aspects will be further discussed in the next literature review sub-section, which discusses socio-cultural factors in second language acquisition.

On their part, Meeks & Jewkes (2003) believe that Krashen’s theories on language and acquisition represent the two extremes of the debate on student’s learning.
Supporters of the acquisition side believe that language is learned mainly through immersion. Supporters of the learning side believe that students need to be explicitly taught what and how to learn. Meeks & Jewkes (2003) believe that students learn both ways. Sometimes they acquire information unconsciously and sometimes they have to be specifically taught. While at other times, they learn and acquire at once.

*Socio-cultural factors in second language acquisition*

Society and culture also play a large role in acquiring second language skills. As stated by Vygotsky (1962) earlier in the literature review, society and the surrounding environment determine a person’s verbal thought output. Diaz-Rico & Weed (2002) believe that language learning and teaching occurs within social and cultural contexts. People succeed in learning languages in order to become a part of their communities, and to act appropriately according to cultural norms. Second language learners already have certain patterns of behaviour that they use as they learn the new language. These behavioural patterns can be, both, beneficial and limiting in learning the second language community’s social interaction. Therefore, socio-cultural factors such as how people interact with each other on a daily basis are a large part of second language acquisition.

Other socio-cultural factors include: acculturation variables, differential status of languages, value systems, dialects and standard languages as well as cultural patterns and organization of schools (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002, Egbo, 2001). Acculturation, or the process of adapting to a new culture, expands beyond language acquisition. It includes factors such as positive attitudes and relationships between groups of speakers of different languages. Shuman (1978) as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed (2002) believes that perception of equal status between the primary and English language groups, mutual
desire (between the language groups) for the primary language group to assimilate, sharing of social facilities between the different language groups, congruency of cultures between the primary and English language groups, and positive attitudes towards each other’s groups are variables in the acculturation process.

School performance also depends on the social status of minority languages. As per Diaz-Rico & Weed (2002), many middle-class parents believe that learning a second language is personally, socially, and professionally beneficial for their children. However, languages considered as prestigious that parents wish for their children to study are not the ones spoken by recent immigrants (Dicker, 1992 as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Thus, this results in a certain bias that being bilingual in a foreign studied language is more valuable than being fluent in an immigrant language. As educators of an increasingly ESL student population, our attitudes towards minority languages need to improve. Teachers must ensure that minority language students do not feel inferior to their majority English speakers counterparts. Also, teachers should be aware of their own biases they hold regarding minority languages and recognize that they communicate these biases intentionally or not. Second language learning should be valued in our society whether the language is considered as “prestigious” or not (Foscolos, 2000).

Students also need to be socially and culturally comfortable when learning a second language (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Value systems just as attitudes affect the relationships between students and with their teachers. A typical North American classroom consists of school values such as speed and time efficiency supported by standardized testing, task-oriented classroom procedures, conforming to schedules and authority, maintaining order and discipline, and academic achievement for personal
growth (LeCompte, 1981 as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002). Within this rigid school structure, minority language students must feel comfortable to switch between their home and school cultural values in order to be academically and socially successful. This includes incorporating more flexible and comfortable classroom procedures, as well as using literature and displaying photographs from other cultures in order to avoid student alienation from their home culture. Thus, Diaz –Rico & Weed (2002) believe that the success of second language acquisition highly depends on the learners’ process of adapting to a new culture, the status of their primary language, their community’s view of the English language, the social and cultural language use in the community, and the relationship between their home culture and school culture.

Research shows a positive correlation between the incorporation of student language and culture and academic success (Cummings, 1983). When student language and culture are seen positively rather than as a disadvantage, students are empowered. Including student language does not necessarily mean teaching it in school – it means valuing the student’s language in the context of the school and communicating the value of the student’s culture. Research also shows that knowledge of more than one language does not interfere with the understanding of language rules (Garcia et al., 1983) but enhances student performance (Cummings, 1986; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Many studies provide support for this finding, for example, the 1998 summary of research conducted by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (National Association for Bilingual Education, 1998). Even in California, where bilingual education has been highly controversial, results from San Francisco and San Jose on achievement tests found that students who completed bilingual education generally
performed better than native English speakers in math, reading, language, and spelling (Asimov, 1998). Another result of this study concludes that cultural and linguistic preservation in the classroom seem to have a positive impact on academic success. Also, as Diaz (2001) states, the possibility of school failure is increased if the languages students speak are neglected or reduced to a secondary position in their schooling. However, critiques of bilingual education exist due to both political, such as minority language status, and pragmatic considerations. In many schools, there are not enough trained teachers for such programs and there are limited numbers of students who speak the same language in order to create an entire program (Diaz, 2001).

According to Egbo (2001), traditional schools “are organized around hierarchical and monolithic models of instruction that are congruent with the values of mainstream society” (p. 58). This practice de-emphasizes minority cultural values, learning styles and dialects. Diaz-Rico & Weed (2002) state how cultural patterns and organization of schools affect minority students’ learning and performance. Examples of these structures within schools include: curriculum, pedagogy, testing, policies, limited student roles, as well as limited parent/community involvement (Nieto, 2000 as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). The authors believe that curriculum development and pedagogy skills need to be adjusted. Often, the existing curriculum excludes minority students by ignoring and disallowing them to identify with their own cultures. Pedagogy is often tiresome in basic skills curriculum classrooms and focuses extensively on the pressure to cover the material. Standardized testing adds to school inequity where students who perform poorly are redirected to basic skills or remedial classes where they were initially unsuccessful. Further, disciplinary policies often discriminate against certain behaviours.
and in turn, label these students as delinquent. Limited student roles result in student alienation, off task behaviour or disruptions, and passive frustration. Finally, the authors believe that limited community and parent involvement may be misinterpreted as lack of concern for children’s education; however, this may just be a mismatch between school and home cultures (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002).

According to Ghosh (2002), while there have been tremendous changes in attitude toward intellectually and physically challenged students, school policies based on organizational needs rather than on the needs of students have not altogether disappeared. Sometimes minority students are put into special education classes when they cannot keep up with the rest of the class due to the language of instruction, and this is explained as student failure. The segregation of students in special education classes has lifetime consequences for students. Not only are they likely to remain labelled as permanent underachievers but this label also affects their self-concept and identity. As a result, their low self-concept and confused identity may cause socially unacceptable behaviour (Ghosh, 2002).

Diaz (2001) also believes that in the United States, people have generally been socialized to think of language diversity as a negative rather than a positive condition. Yet in most countries of the world, such as in Canada, bilingualism and multilingualism are the norm, rather than the exception. Sometimes bilingualism is highly valued, usually, with those who are formally educated and have status and power in society. At other times, bilingualism is seen as a sign of low status. When particular languages are prohibited, this results in silencing the voices of those who speak them (Diaz, 2001). Diaz (2001) also states that in the United States, most of the pedagogical approaches
assume that language diversity is an illness; however, research points to the benefits of native language development.

The above literature review of how socio-cultural factors affect student language learning provides us with a realistic outlook of the many challenges language students face in addition to their linguistic acquisition difficulties. Therefore, second language teachers need to be sensitive to the cultural and social obstacles their students need to overcome. Additionally, as stated previously, language teachers should have a solid theoretical background and knowledge of the language acquisition process. Finally, educators and pedagogues need to be prepared with appropriate teaching methodologies and specific instructional techniques in second language education. The following section of this chapter will discuss ESL methodologies and related research studies.

2.5 Overview of ESL Teaching Methodologies

The most common approaches to linguistic diversity have been ESL and bilingual education. Both of these approaches have been controversial since they challenge the assimilationist method, which is a belief that every minority group should integrate into the mainstream culture through a one-way process, by giving up their original culture and traditions (Bennett, 2003). As Lambert (1990) discussed, young children are expected to reconstruct their cognitive abilities and linguistic knowledge. They are also asked to give up their heritage and become Canadians as quickly as possible. However, the assimilationist approach is based on a traditional view that focuses on individualistic learning to protect national identity and develop a sense of broader Canadian values. Conversely, multicultural education creates open-mindedness to other cultures, treats each culture on an equal scale, and embraces, not just accepts Canadian diversity.
Nevertheless, bilingual education has been found to be more effective than other programs, such as ESL alone.

Recently, the need for additional English language instruction beyond the advanced ESL level has become more apparent. According to Nixon (1991), transitional classes, taken before and/or with a mainstream English class, are devised to enhance the skills that play such an important role in the mainstream classes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Professionals involved with transitional classes state that students have definitely benefited from an additional daily period of ESL instruction. Nixon (1991) identified specific transitional approaches. Through the Cognitive Approach for example, ESL instructors are challenged to acquire more skills in diagnosing the needs of limited English proficiency students by replacing language teaching with language learning. A Content-based Approach incorporates subject matter suitable to the student’s age and grade level with the teaching of second language skills. The main objective in transitional approaches is to mainstream the student gradually, starting with the subjects that are the least linguistically demanding, such as art, music, and physical education. English is studied in sheltered class, and core subjects are taught in the student’s first language (Nixon, 1991).

Sheltered instruction is another example where teachers teach content in strategic ways making it comprehensible while promoting academic English language development (Short & Echevarria, 2005). Sheltered instruction techniques for content comprehension include slower speech, clear enunciation, visual aids, vocabulary development, connections to student experiences, and supplementary materials. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model is a good example of sheltered
instruction. It is a lesson planning and delivery approach composed of 30 instructional strategies grouped into eight components: Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment. Teachers use these strategies by incorporating them into the mainstream curriculum while promoting student’s academic English language development. The SIOP Model’s key features include inclusion of language objectives in every content lesson, development of students’ background knowledge, and emphasis on academic literacy practice (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

Success of ESL students is not only the responsibility of teachers specifically trained in bilingual education, ESL, and other transitional programs, but for all teachers and all schools (Diaz, 2001). Nixon (1991) believes that it is the teacher who sets the pace, sequences the lessons, avoids perplexing English lessons, and offers opportunities that are conducive to language learning. While learning new approaches and techniques may be very helpful, successful language teaching means primarily changing one’s attitudes towards the students and their linguistic-cultural backgrounds, as well as their communities (Cummins 1996; Nieto 1999). Diaz (2001) suggests the following approaches in order for teachers to achieve success with language minority students: 1) teachers need to understand how language is learned; 2) teachers need to develop an additive perspective concerning bilingualism; and 3) teachers and schools need to consciously learn how to foster native language literacy.

Second language instruction should be cognizant and sensitive to the historical and cultural backgrounds of the students. The teaching of a second language (or third) should not aim to change students’ identities or their relationship with the social world.
around them, nor should it be used as a power tool in order to degrade their native language and/or culture (Ghosh, 2002). Rather, it should create an environment where children from different cultural and linguistic contexts can relate to each other through mutual respect and understanding while sharing their commonalities instead of focusing on each others’ differences. Approaches to ESL instruction should focus on making the students comfortable and able to relate to the language and culture of the second language. As some writers argue, language can either be a tool for empowerment or a tool for domination (Cummins 2000, Corson, 1997).

Related Studies

Many American studies have researched student teachers, and teachers’ perspectives regarding diversity in the classroom, cultural and linguistic. At James Madison University in Virginia in 1997, a study was conducted on critical needs in the ESL education in order to design an appropriate ESL endorsement program. It involved a state-wide sample of K-12 schools with ESL programs. Results indicated that teacher preparation programs should emphasize more hands-on teaching and model active teaching to better prepare prospective teachers to work with non-native students. Respondents indicated that the greatest needs are to have a well-designed ESL syllabus, updated materials, consistent assessment measures, more experienced personnel, more resources, and better prepared professionals. However, this study as with many others, did not focus on ESL students’ opinions and voices.

Although many related studies have taken place in the United States, a limited number of Canadian studies exist (Cummins, 1997). Overall, there exists a scarcity of qualitative Canadian studies inquiring about the perceptions and experiences of ESL high
school students. However, two significant studies from Alberta stand out. Foscolos (2000) focused on the perceptions of Asian Pacific ESL students regarding their high school learning experiences. This qualitative study captured the voice of students who have been under-represented in the discourses related to language, immigration and education. The findings of the study include the following: increased time positively affects the level of English Language Proficiency (ELP) as well as success in high school; effective instructional support is needed to develop ELP and socio-cultural factors impact on relationships with peers and teachers, such as feelings of isolation, frustration, and minimal interaction was a common perception. The drawback of this study was that the student sample was limited to only Asian students instead of a larger more diverse group of immigrants.

Bird (1998) conducted a similar study, except this time the focus was on ESL students' needs and teaching practices of ESL teachers. This ethnographic research centred on how ESL students increase their confidence and English language skills when the extra academic and language assistance they often require is provided to them along with mainstream students in support groups. Additionally, this study addressed the key role of classroom environment in enhancing ESL students' participation in curricular activities and the importance of building a support network to include ESL students in the overall school system. This study also revealed that teachers are critical promoters of ESL students' cultural and academic integration into the school. Additionally, this study explored issues concerning clarity of instruction for ESL students and making the content instruction more comprehensible for them. Finally, successful integration of ESL students derives from inclusive teaching practices such as co-operative learning, peer-
tutoring, heterogeneous grouping, context teaching and audio visual aids rather than segregation an removal from mainstream classes. Collaborative learning in Group and Buddy-Up Programs were also mentioned as successful strategies for ESL students. Both of the above studies were significant to Canadian research findings; however, they were conducted in the province of Alberta.

During the time of writing this thesis, the researcher was not able to locate many recent published Canadian studies that specifically focused on ESL high school students' experiences. However, Foscolos (2000) mentions a significant published study with a focus on the academic achievement of ESL students. The leading research question of this specific study was "What are ESL learner's perceptions of the factors which may contribute to or accompany their ability to achieve in school"? (Early, 1992, as cited in Foscolos, 2000, p.34). This case study was conducted among twenty-six immigrant high school students. The findings concluded that the more successful students were highly ambitious and spoke of future university goals while the less successful ones were less clear about their future. The students commented that they had to change their learning strategies, where instead of focusing on rote memory, they found that research skills and asking questions were more important and beneficial to their learning. They also commented that being confident and having a high self-esteem was helpful in student achievement. However, the deficiency in this study was that success was defined and categorized by a grade "C" average or above.

Another significant study conducted by Kanno and Applebaum (1995), as cited in Foscolos (2000), is a published study with three Japanese students about their experiences of various ESL programs in Toronto. The findings highlight a strong
relationship between learning English and making friends. Learning English was more important for the students who wanted to make Canadian friends than for the students who only wished to make friends with other Japanese students. The findings also concluded that the Japanese students' motivation to learn English was affected by their English speakers’ peer acceptance. The participants also perceived a gap between their ESL and mainstream classes, and could not see how these classes connected. In fact, the students even “saw the ESL program as an impediment to their integration” (p.38).

According to the researchers, these students were marginalized in the school and had reached a limit of their language acquisition process. A perception of ESL students as learning disabled, and ESL classes as remedial was also noted. Kanno and Applebaum (1995) as cited in Foscolos (2000) concluded that if schools do not advocate a successful integration of ESL students by bringing the majority and minority students together, then, a true cross-cultural understanding and respect will not develop. However, the students interviewed in this study were international without the intention of staying and living in Canada permanently. Another deficiency was the limited sample of only three students’ perspectives.

Besides university studies, there are also recent and significant reports on Canadian immigration and ESL education issues. A report by an Ottawa researcher and reporter Andrew Duffy, which was funded by the Atkinson Foundation stands out. In 2003, the author completed and reported a year-long study on the overall relationship between immigration and education in Canada. Duffy’s report included specific studies such as the Roessingh & Watt’s study in Calgary. This is one of the only long-term Canadian studies of ESL students. It found an overall dropout rate of 74 % among ESL
students – a rate two-and-a-half times that of the general student population.

Additionally, this study found that 93% of ESL students who arrived as beginners in English were most likely to drop out. Further, Duffy examined Alberta's education program and found that 81% of Alberta’s immigrant students passed the Language Arts portion of the province’s standardized grade 6 test, 91% of Alberta’s bilingual Ukrainian Program students passed Alberta’s Grade 6 Language Arts Test, whereas, in Ontario, 67% of the 2,391 ESL students failed the Grade 10 literacy test.

Myers (2003) also provides a report of an interesting outlook on the realities of ESL programs and support in Canadian school boards. Myers states that in the fall of 2002, a survey by the advocacy group People For Education reported that ESL provision had been reduced in Toronto. 60% of their ESL programs had been lost, and ESL leadership cutbacks were increasingly taking place (Myers, 2003).

The limited number of Canadian qualitative studies in the field of ESL education focusing on students’ voices, especially in the south-western region of Ontario, sparked the researcher’s interest and decision to devise, implement, and analyze this study. The researcher hopes that this study will contribute to ESL education and literature by voicing student experiences and their teachers’ opinions about which transitional programs and instructional methodologies identify and suit ESL students’ academic and social needs.

While understanding the theories of language acquisition and applying the suitable language and literacy teaching methodologies, teachers create a successful learning environment for struggling language learners. As future educators of an increasing multilingual student population in our educational system and society, we have many crucial issues to consider. Not only should we be trained in specific language
acquisition theories and practices, but we should also consider socio-cultural factors such as the surrounding community and its relations with the school and students, organizational patterns within school systems, and the social status of minority languages in order to clearly identify and understand ESL students' social and academic needs.

Most importantly, our perspectives and beliefs need to change when looking at language education, specifically bilingual and ESL instruction of immigrant students.

Differentiating our teaching methodologies in order to suit the needs of every student is a beginning approach in breaking the barriers of frustration experienced by our struggling students. The positive attitudes and appropriate teaching strategies we implement, will tremendously aid in creating a successful language learning environment for all students.

Once again, the research questions that guided the study were:

What are ESL high school students' perceptions of their learning experiences in and outside of their ESL classrooms? What approaches to ESL instruction are teachers currently using in the participating school and what are teachers' perceptions of linguistic diversity? Are there significant differences between the perceptions of ESL students and those of their teachers? What are the academic and social needs of minority language students?
CHAPTER III
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the study was designed and implemented. This study was based on qualitative research procedures, which do not use statistical or quantifiable means to arrive at findings (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, as cited in Foscolos, 2000). Qualitative research is “set in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of the participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language” (p.14, Creswell, 1998). The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. It is also emergent, flexible, and interpretive in nature. Creswell (1988) includes the following reasons for conducting qualitative research: the nature of the research question starts with how as opposed to what or why in quantitative research; the topic needs to be explored; variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behaviour of participants; there is a need to present a detailed view of the topic; to study individuals in their natural setting. In this study, qualitative research was used primarily to emphasize the researcher’s role as a participant and an active learner rather than as an expert. The research was conducted and analyzed from the view of the participants. According to Bogden & Biklen (1998), the researcher enters the participants’ world to know them and gain their trust, as well as to keep a systematic record of observations. By taking the role of participant observer, the
researcher needs to be aware of her own preconceptions, values and beliefs in order to understand the world of others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The Participants

The prime criterion for participant selection was ESL students who demonstrated an interest in participating in the study and sharing their high school learning experiences. The participants were drawn among students from various levels and grades in the ESL program, in a high school in a Southwestern Ontario city. Five groups of students were interviewed from four different classes; forty-one students were interviewed in total. The demographic profile of student participants is provided in Figure 3.1 under the following variables: gender, age, grade, level of English second language proficiency, and home country. The profile of teacher participants is also provided in Table 2 using the following factors: age, sex (gender), nationality, native/ minority language(s) spoken, educational background, teaching experience, and ESL qualifications. Seven ESL teachers participated in the study.

Figure 3.1: Student Profile Tables

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### GROUP #2

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<tr>
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<th>GRADE</th>
<th>ESL LEVEL</th>
<th>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 (C)</td>
<td>COLOMBIA</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>3 (C)</td>
<td>HONDURAS</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 (C)</td>
<td>LIBERIA</td>
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Group #1

The first group interviewed was comprised of students who arrived in Canada between August 2004 and September 2005 from the following countries: Lebanon (2), United Arab Emirates (1), Russia (1), Syria (1), Turkey (1), and Iraq (2). There were five males and three females in this group. Their ages ranged from 15-18 years. They were in the ESL Level D class and in grades 10 or 11.

Group #2

The second group interviewed was composed of six students: four males and two females. Students in this group came to Canada between February 2003 and September 2005 from the following countries: Honduras (2), Albania (1), Colombia (1), Liberia (1), and Sudan (1). Their ages ranged from 17-19 years and were also either in grades 10 or 11. They were from the ESL Level C class.

Group #3

The third group was made up of four female and four male students. These students were from the same ESL Level C class as the previous group. Students in this group arrived in Canada between September 2004 and August 2005 from the following countries: Iraq (3),
Colombia (1), Poland (1), Sudan (1), Liberia (1), and Croatia (1). Their age ranged from 14-19 years old, and they were also either in the grade 10 or 11 levels.

**Group #4**

Group #4 consisted of ten students: five females, and five males. This was an ESL Level E, highest level of the program. Students in this class arrived in Canada between September 2002 and February 2006 from the following countries: Lebanon (1), Sudan (1), Colombia (2), Iraq (3), Poland (1), Liberia (1), and Eritrea (1). Their ages ranged from 15-19 years and they were either in the grade 10, 11, or 12 levels.

**Group #5**

The students in the last group-focus interview arrived in Canada between May 2004 and January 2006 from the following countries: Lebanon (1), Iraq (2), Liberia (1), Colombia (1), Sudan (1), Cambodia (1), Peru (1), and Albania (1). Their ages ranged from 15-20 years old. They were in grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 at the time of the interview. There were four females and five females in this group.
Figure 3.2: Table Profile Comparison of 7 Teachers

* ESL refers to specific English Second Language teaching qualifications: Y = Yes, N = No; more specifically, S = Specialist, 1 = Part 1, 2 = Part 2 of the 3 part ESL specialist Program in Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>NATIONALITY/ (NATIVE LANGUAGE)</th>
<th>MINORITY LANGUAGE</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>TEACHING EXP.</th>
<th>*ESL/ (S,1,2)</th>
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<td>German, Italian, French</td>
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<td>BA (Psych.), B.Ed</td>
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<td>B.BS Honours, B.Ed</td>
<td>5 years</td>
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-B.Ed: Bachelor of Education
-M.A.T: Masters of Arts in Teaching
-M.Ed: Masters of Education
-B.HK: Bachelor Of Human Kinetics
-B.BS: Bachelor of Business Science
-BA: Bachelor of Arts

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Interviews

The primary and secondary sources of data came from the interviews. According to Hutchinson (1988), interviews permit researchers to verify, clarify, or alter what they thought happened, to achieve a full understanding of an incident, and to take into account the lived experiences of participants. Two types of interviews were used in this study – individual and focus group. The participating teachers were interviewed one-on-one while the students were interviewed in focus groups with open-ended questions to allow flexibility in answers and create a comfortable environment.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary source of the data in this study was the focus group interviews with open-ended questions conducted among the student participants. It was important to begin the fieldwork as an overt participant observer in order to gain the respect and trust from potential participants for the interviews. Participant observation allows the researcher the opportunity to attain the status of a trusted person, see patterns of behaviour, and learn how the actions of the participants correspond to their words. The main outcome of participant observation is to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behaviour (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The first week consisted of observation and immersion in the participants' environment in order to establish a positive rapport with them before conducting the interviews. The secondary source of data in this study was one-on-one interviews between the participating ESL teachers and the researcher. The interview questions focused on teacher perceptions of ESL students, their needs and their overall integration into the school.
Guiding interview questions were prepared in advance to facilitate the process. Besides the demographics of both, the students and teachers, specifically, the student interview questions were grouped into the following categories: high school impressions, peer support, regular classes, ESL classes/program, satisfaction with high school and overall experience. Some of the questions included were: Are you enjoying high school? How do you get along with other students in your classes? How have your ESL classes helped you with your regular classes? For a detailed student interview question guide, please refer to Appendix J. The teacher interview questions consisted of the following categories: attitude and teaching approach, mainstream classes, ESL classes, and satisfaction with high school. The questions included: How have ESL classes helped students integrate into mainstream classes, and what do you think about their social integration into the school environment? If you could design a better ESL Program, what would it be like? What have you noticed about ESL students’ learning styles and attitudes, compared to those students in mainstream classes? For a detailed teacher interview question guide, please refer to Appendix K. The school’s ESL program policies were also examined in the analysis process.

The analysis of data was conducted in two phases. The first phase occurred while still in the field. The researcher observed and took notes in specific ESL classes, but also actively participated by circulating around the class and voluntarily helping ESL students with their work. This established a positive rapport with the students and teachers, gaining the trust of the participants and familiarizing them with the researcher in order for a certain comfort level to develop prior to the interviews/group discussions. The second phase was conducted after the interviews were completed. The interviews were recorded
on a digital voice recorder; data was later transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. For complete data analysis, the researcher listened to each interview more than once in order to clarify any misunderstandings of the answers and to transcribe the data accurately. The answers were also clarified and paraphrased by the interviewer during the actual interview process. Several themes emerged as a result of the analysis of data. These themes, which are discussed in the next chapter, include learning preferences and teaching strategies, ESL Program, academic and social integration, greatest challenges and accomplishments, and overall attitude and ambitions.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to the study. First, the sample population was limited to students in one school in one South Western Ontario city; therefore, the results cannot be generalized. Also, the sample population was limited to ESL students and teachers, while it may have been valuable to ask for the perspectives of mainstream teachers in order to compare them with those of the ESL teachers. Parents’ participation would also have enriched the diversity of views in the study. Additionally, due to the students’ varying school timetables and participants from various grades and ESL levels, scheduling interaction time was initially a challenge and resulted in limited observation time of only two visits per class. Another relevant limitation was the difficulty in comprehending some of the students’ ideas and answers because of their limited ability to express their opinions accurately, various English language proficiency levels as well as mispronunciations. However, the researcher asked for clarification wherever necessary during the interview process. Finally, diversity in the classroom is a controversial topic that has been continuously debated over the last few decades. Even though most of the
teachers interviewed held an integrative approach and progressive views about ESL programs and students, as perceived by the researcher; however, in reality, they may have believed in and practiced more traditional approaches to ESL education.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

There were five groups of students; each group was comprised of six to ten participants; forty-one students were interviewed in total. Seven teachers participated in the one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The students interviewed provided many interesting views and opinions regarding their overall ESL learning experiences. Some of them had similar answers as the teachers while others had different responses than expected. The major themes reflected the teachers’ and were grouped into the following sub-headings: learning preferences, ESL Program, academic and social integration, greatest challenges and accomplishments, and overall attitude and ambitions, as noted in the previous chapter. The primary research questions which guided the study were: What are ESL high school students’ perceptions of their learning experiences in and outside of their ESL classrooms? What approaches to ESL instruction are teachers currently using in the participating school and what are teachers’ perceptions of language diversity? Are there significant differences between the perceptions of ESL students and those of their teachers? What are the academic and social needs of minority language students? The researcher argues that the students and teachers brought a unique perspective from their learning and teaching experiences. The overall argument in this study is that ESL students’ academic and social needs are determined by how their overall learning experiences affect their perception of their ESL Program, academic and social integration, greatest challenges and accomplishments, and overall attitude and ambitions.
This chapter will explore this argument by examining the students’ voices and teachers’ opinions in order to provide a clearer understanding of the factors that affect ESL students’ learning experiences. Some references/citations will also be made.

Students

4.1: Learning Preferences

ESL students’ learning preferences was the first categorical theme explored. Students in group #1 stated that they specifically prefer detailed explanations, pictures, drawings, hand motions/movements, and demonstrations. They also commented that they favour group work, but only in ESL classes rather than individual work in their mainstream classes. However, some disagreed and believe that only one person does the work in each group.

As in the first group interviewed, the students in group #2 were mostly interested in discussing their learning preferences. These students prefer to learn by drawings and pictures of vocabulary, even in non-ESL classes (i.e. construction class). They like to be given many examples, modeling, clear instructions, and detailed explanations of every step. They also like to practice reading out loud, learn new vocabulary, write essays, and listen to and write dictations. As mentioned by Brown (2001), dictations not only develop writing skills, but also help in listening comprehension and vocabulary development. These students prefer learning when teachers write on the board, explain, and then discuss with the students. Some like group work because it allows them to share their ideas with friends and discuss explanations with their peers as opposed to being embarrassed by speaking out loud in front of the whole class. Others prefer individual work. As stated by one student, “I think in groups it’s more it’s much better because you
compare your ideas with the others, so you think if they are the same or no…” (Interview Transcript, Student A). In this group, as in the previous one, some students also expressed the view that there are students who do not do any work in groups and achieve the same marks as the ones who are more productive. For example, one student commented on the lack of effort by a student in a group assignment, “I had a friend in my world religion class last semester that is what she did. She doesn’t wanna do anything when they give her group works…” (Interview Transcript, Student E). Their learning preferences also include after school one-on-one tutorials with teachers, extra “homework”, after school programs, and peer-tutors with students of the same native or English language.

Learning preferences was also the most prevalent theme with the third group of students (Interview Transcripts, Group #3). In general, this group of students would like to have more projects and assignments in ESL classes so they can apply these skills in regular classes. They also like having presentations, learning new vocabulary, and using class dictionaries. Specifically, they enjoy learning through grammar, speaking, spelling, pronunciation, reading, and writing. They would prefer to learn how to write essays earlier in the program. They also enjoy summer school where some students practice their language skills through computer use and would like to see more language computer labs in their high school.

Group #4 was quite an informed group of students eager to comment on all of the themes beginning with learning preferences. Just as in the other groups, this group also enjoys learning through peer-tutors, who speak the same first language as them, and having homework assignments. Their learning preferences include: slow and detailed
explanations, looking at visuals and handouts, writing notes, studying grammar and
writing essays. These teaching strategies and learning tasks provide them with skills that
they can apply in mainstream classes. They stated that studying, paying attention,
participating, doing homework and assignments, attending classes and being on-time, as
well as learning new vocabulary in ESL classes, which they can apply to other subjects,
helps them learn and develop study skills. They also prefer individual to group work.
Interestingly, they commented on some of the teaching strategies they prefer and how
these methods help them to learn better. For example, they stated that it is difficult for
them if they cannot visually see the teachers’ explanations as the following conversation
shows:

**Researcher:** A lot of notes?

**Student A:** It depends who the teacher is. Some teachers they can’t write on the
boards, and some teachers can.

**Researcher:** They can’t write on the board?

**Student A:** No, cause some of them are allergic to it.

**Researcher:** Ok, so how do they teach you?

**Student I:** They photocopy, you know.

**Researcher:** Do they use the overhead projector?

**Student G:** Not overhead projector, just talk and write.

**Researcher:** Do you find that difficult?

**Students:** Yeah, sometimes. (Interview Transcript, Group #4).

As opposed to most of the other students interviewed, the last group of students
prefers group projects rather than individual activities. Their other learning preferences
include: reading, writing, and speaking activities, essays, and sentence structure,
repetitive explanations (of vocabulary: definition, meaning, and use), simple examples, and pictures; especially in the lower 1, 2 levels.

To summarize, most groups of students stated that they are visual learners and prefer pictures and drawings of new vocabulary or concepts, as well as written detailed explanations, especially of grammatical concepts as also recommended by Vygotsky (1962) as pointed out in Chapter II. All of the groups commented that they like to learn through grammar and writing exercises, as well as reading and speaking activities. Many students also mentioned how peer tutoring, group work, as well as one-on-one attention with teachers provides them with a comfortable learning environment where they are not afraid to ask questions. This finding is also consistent with previously explored literature where students feel successful and empowered in an overall comfortable learning environment (Meeks & Jewkes 2003). However, some of these students, as in other groups, also believe that group work is not always fair, since the workload is often unequally distributed. Additionally, the second group commented that they would like more academic after-school programs and also prefer learning through dictations. As stated by Brown (2001) in Chapter II, dictations are not only productive as guided writing activities, but they also improve listening comprehension and vocabulary development skills.

4.2: ESL Program

The first group was mostly interested in commenting on the advantages that the ESL Program offers. These students mentioned that they can integrate the skills and knowledge they acquire in ESL classes into their regular classes. Their ESL classes provide them with a more comfortable speaking environment where they openly practice
and develop their English skills. More importantly, they also commented that their ESL teachers understand them better because they also speak another language or come from a different culture. Other students commented that they would like to change their non-ESL teachers because they do not sufficiently explain the course material. Additionally, one student felt that the ESL Level 5 (the highest ESL proficiency level of the school’s program) is a waste of time and should be cancelled; however, another commented that it is beneficial for students who need it.

Interestingly, this group of students also commented on why they prefer ESL teachers to their non-ESL teachers. They grasped the fact that ESL teachers had somewhat of a different understanding or approach, as is illustrated in the following excerpt:

**Student D:** All the ESL teachers are good.

**Researcher:** All the ESL teachers are good?

**Student D:** Yes.

**Student D:** And ESL teachers understand us because they are not Canadians, maybe they’re born here…but…

**Researcher:** They have an understanding, maybe they speak another language, maybe they come from another background.

**Student D:** Yeah (Interview Transcript – Group #1).

The students in group #2 had an overall view that the ESL Program is very helpful compared to schools without one. In general, they believe that it helps them develop grammar, reading, and writing, which are essentials skills they can apply in other mainstream classes, as seen in the following excerpt:
**Student A:** Actually, it helps you a lot, imagine if this school doesn’t have ESL, so imagine yourself in another school without ESL how hard is it gonna be for you, so I think it’s good. It helps you a lot.

**Student E:** It helps you in reading and grammar and stuff.

**Student A:** Understanding everything.

**Researcher:** Right, but how do ESL classes, what you learn, the grammar and the reading and understanding, how does that help you in your other classes, like science, math, geography?

**Student E:** Like if you guys have a reading, like in science, class, that helps you because you learn reading in the ESL class, so you go over there and you read like others (Interview Transcript, Group #2).

However, they all agreed that the common disadvantage of the program is that there are too many ESL levels, especially Level 5. They believe that without this level, they could graduate from high school earlier.

Group #3 had a few comments regarding the ESL Program. The most common advantage was that this school and the program provide great opportunities to meet other ESL students from similar cultural backgrounds. This group also agreed with the others that a language computer lab would facilitate their learning. As students in other groups, these students stated that they would like to start writing essays earlier in the program:

Um, if we do like more essays you can write other questions, you learn how to write anything, you get like high marks in religion and other classes, but we don’t even know how to start it (Interview Transcript, Student C).

When questioned further, this student responded that he would prefer to begin writing essays in Level 2 as opposed to Level 4 which was the current level of this group of students, especially since he felt that it would better prepare students for the standardized literacy test where writing an essay is a necessary component. The student found this
portion of the test the most difficult. They also recommended more projects and assignments in ESL classes so that they can apply these skills in other mainstream classes.

Group #4 also provided feedback regarding the program. In general, they enjoy and have fun within the ESL Program. It provides them with a comfortable learning environment where they are not embarrassed or shy to speak out loud. In other words, the program enhances their confidence and self-esteem. However, they sometimes feel as if the specific ESL levels are either too easy or too difficult. They would like to see more movies in the program, begin writing essays in Level 2, as was also commented by the previous group, and most importantly, have an ESL Program graduation ceremony. One student even recommends having a full year of intensive ESL or subject-specific ESL classes in order to acquire and learn more language skills so they can succeed in the other mainstream classes. The student states:

I would say, um, you know you have your ESL class, right and then let’s say you have second period English, it doesn’t do nothing with ESL, and when you go and sit there you don’t know nothing, right, and I know a lot of people who do that who just sit there and they don’t understand nothing. It’s kinda hard cause if you think about it, it’s like ok, we’re wasting one semester sitting here and doing nothing. Yeah, I would be like, why they don’t teach, like they would have other classes to teach the ESL students, and they’re like done ESL for one year, they can take regular class...I would ... (Interview Transcript, Group 4: Student E).

The ESL Program has its advantages and disadvantages, according to the last group of students interviewed (Interview Transcript, Group #5). The students believe that in their ESL classes they do not feel embarrassed when reading out-loud; therefore, they enjoy practicing reading in a comfortable and productive learning environment. This finding restates to the previously mentioned issue of confidence. They also commented that they have “nice” ESL teachers who give many examples and

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explanations. However, like some students in the other groups, they would like to see more computer use and a possible language lab, as they state in the following passage:

**Student I:** Spend more time on the computer, like if we can go in the computer lab.

**Researcher:** Ok, so maybe, have you heard of a computer language lab?

**Student I:** Yeah, to teach a new language on the computer (Interview Transcript, Group #5).

This group agreed that it would be nice to see and use a language lab since the lab would not only help them with writing and spelling, but also with correct pronunciation, as stated by Student D (Interview Transcripts, Group #5). In general, the students commented that they would like to have more classroom and after school resources such as track and field equipment including shoes and clothes, a swimming pool, and soccer gates.

To summarize, almost all of the groups commented that they would like to have access to a computer language laboratory in order to facilitate their English language learning process. Another common theme commented on by most of the groups, was how students could integrate specific skills from their ESL classes such as reading, grammar, and writing, to ease their comprehension and academic performance in mainstream classes. There were mixed opinions regarding the Level 5 class. Some students believed that it is beneficial for those who need it; whereas the more popular view was that it was an unnecessary level prolonging their overall time in completing high school. The time factor was also a common theme in the study of Foscolos (2000), where students mentioned how time and the age cap of 19 impede their overall graduation process. Some groups also commented that the ESL Program was a great
place to meet other ESL students and that this multicultural aspect of the school provided an overall comfortable learning environment. A student from group #3 mentioned that beginning to write essays earlier levels of the program would be beneficial in achieving higher scores on standardized examinations. As Diaz-Rico & Weed (2002) stated in Chapter II, valuing time and efficiency, in a structural rigid manner, hinders minority students' academic success, especially on standardized tests. Therefore, flexibility in curriculum adjustment will aid ESL students' overall academic success. Another student from group #4 recommended having a full year of intensive ESL classes or more ESL subject-specific classes. Group #1 also interestingly commented on how they prefer their ESL teachers as opposed to their non-ESL teachers since many of them also speak another language or were born in a different country and therefore can understand and identify with their overall experiences including social struggles and linguistic challenges. Overall, the ESL Program creates a comfortable learning environment where students are confident to participate in class and interact with each other.

4.3: Academic and Social Integration

In terms of integration, most of the students in group #1 initially felt embarrassed and "stupid", even made fun of by other students because of their inadequate English language skills. Their limited English proficiency results in initial integration difficulties; however, these difficulties soon diminish as the students begin to acquire more English language. When asked how they get along with other students, they responded as follows:

**Student B:** We felt so stupid.

**Student D:** (laughs). You're right.
Student B: Yeah, because like we didn’t know the language and we were afraid of speaking English, so other people make fun of us, yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, so you got made fun of. Did you kind of, did you make friends from your own nationalities right away?

Student B: Yeah, when I came here, like all of my friends were Iraqi who spoke (inaudible) and Arabic, but now like I have friends from different nationalities.

Student E: You also get better, like when you first don’t speak English, and people make fun of you, right, then you get better and better and that people that make fun of you actually start to become your friends, you actually start joking around with them and stuff.

Student E: Yeah, so it’s not that bad when you know English more (Interview Transcript – Group #1).

From their comments and the researcher’s observations in the school and surrounding environment, most of their friends were also other ESL students with the exception of one Russian student. This student felt that since his native language is a minority language within the context of this particular school (mostly Arabic-rooted languages), he prefers to interact with “Canadians” since there are not too many other students who either speak his language or have the same cultural background as him. Overall, the students enjoyed the benefits of meeting people from all over the world in this particular school’s multicultural environment.

The second group of students did not comment extensively on their academic or social integration. However, as in the other groups, the students in this group mentioned that it was easier for them to make more friends at this school, but most of them were friends with students of the same language or cultural background.

The third group of students commented on how the ESL Program directly relates to and tremendously helps in their overall social integration into the school and with their
academic integration in terms of class comprehension. However, just as in the other
groups, these students commented that they felt lonely and scared at the beginning of
their integrative experience because of limited or nonexistent English language skills.
When asked about making friends in school, one student commented about the social and
academic advantage of the ESL Program as follows:

There is some of them, like if you’re Arab, like you see Arab people, so you
know, but if you don’t, especially if you start at another school that doesn’t have
an ESL program, so it’s really hard, you don’t even know what they’re talking
about in the class (Interview Transcript, Student C).

There were different viewpoints regarding social integration in group #4. Some
students enjoy this Canadian high school and have many friends (most are other ESL
students), some feel as if they have been in this school for too long, and some feel
different from their Canadian peers. This concept of isolation includes acting, talking,
and feeling differently, even from college level students. As one student comments, “But
even if you go to college, when you’re an ESL student, still you would feel different from
others” (Interview Transcript – Student A). Academically, these students, as students in
other groups, also feel that ESL classes provide them with helpful skills they can
integrate into mainstream classes.

In terms of their social integration, the last group of students commented that they
get along well with “Canadian” students and make friends easily. However, they also
feel different from Canadian students, who sometimes make fun of ESL students, which
they believe is their greatest social challenge. This group, as the others, also commented
on how the multicultural environment of the school positively affects their learning and
social experience. For example, when asked to identify what they find positive about their ESL classes, several of the students responded as follows:

**Student C:** The only thing I like is that the other student are different culture, we don't speak the same language so we speak English.

**Student I:** the teachers, like English, it's good. And you feel good after.

**Researcher:** Do you feel more confident?

**Student I:** Yeah, and you talk to other people with that language, it's just cool.

**Student F:** Yeah, and when you talk to your friends they tell you a lot of stuff about their culture and we teach them about our culture.

**Student I:** Yeah, our food, culture, all kinds of stuff! (Interview Transcript, Group #5).

The students feel more confident and comfortable learning English and integrating into the Canadian society in this type of culturally and linguistically diverse academic and social setting.

In summary, most of the groups suggested that their success of being socially integrated depended upon their non-ESL peers’ acceptance and by “fitting in” to the Canadian culture. Feelings of embarrassment, loneliness, and isolation were also common barriers to their initial social integration. The overall multicultural school environment eased their social transition from home to school culture, since the students could identify with and befriend other ESL students who were usually from the same cultural and linguistic background. Additionally, the ESL Program helped with their academic and social integration by providing them with skills they can use in mainstream classes and by having the opportunity to meet same native language students to ease their classroom comprehension and socialization.
4.4: Greatest Challenges and Accomplishments

Friendship was a common theme when the students from the first group commented about challenges and accomplishments. They said that finding their own circle of friends was a social challenge as well as an accomplishment, since they felt that friends could help during difficult times and experiences. Friends could also help in finding jobs, which was also another social challenge. Some of them felt they had already experienced a form of racism (in reference to discrimination) when they mentioned that it was difficult for them to find a job because of their limited English skills and accent. Other accomplishments mentioned by the students were academic recognition and winning soccer games. The only accomplishment mentioned in the second group was winning a soccer game as in the previous group.

In terms of their challenges, the students in group #3 feel that overcoming embarrassment and being made fun of is their greatest social challenge, while giving presentations is their greatest academic challenge. Adjusting linguistically and culturally were also great accomplishments for this group. Catching up on missed work is also a challenge while a common accomplishment in this group is understanding and using three languages at the same time. Their greatest accomplishment is graduating from the ESL Program and high school, in general, as well as learning to speak English and communicating with people from other cultures.

The students in group #4 also face many academic challenges. The major one mentioned is speaking and reading out-loud in non-ESL classes because they feel embarrassed of their accent. Some other challenges include writing essays to build vocabulary, and motivation to show up in school. Just as with the previous group, this group’s main accomplishments are graduating from the ESL Program and earning all the
necessary credits to complete high school. Academically, they wish to achieve high 
grades in their classes. One student mentioned, for example, that her highest academic 
achievement so far was obtaining a 92% grade in religion class.

Students’ accomplishments in the last group included acquiring English 
comprehension skills they can utilize in class and in practical real-life situations as well 
as making a successful transition from ESL to regular English classes. While 
overcoming the fear of reading out-loud is their main academic challenge. Their 
academic fear of reading out-loud and of being made fun of as a result, is demonstrated in 
the following excerpt:

Researcher: Ok, but in your classes, what do you find difficult besides 
homework?

Student I: To read out loud.

Researcher: You find reading difficult?

Student I: Yeah, like when you read faster, you have to pick up the speed, some 
people can’t do that, like me.

Researcher: Does anyone else have that problem? Is everyone confident when 
they read out loud?

Students: Sometimes we’re nervous yeah, were; nervous, cause there’s a lot of 
people looking at you, and laughing at you.

Researcher: Who would laugh at you?

Student H: Like in the other classes, the Canadian students.

Researcher: How about in your ESL classes, are you comfortable reading out 
loud?

Student F: Yeah, cause we all know, like, we’re all learning English, you know. 
But even in regular classes, I still read, because I’m in ESL I’m proud of it, I 
don’t care (Interview Transcript, Group #5).
To conclude, making friends and academic recognition were some of the groups' accomplishments, while presentations and speaking in class were common challenges for the other groups. Group # 3 believes that overcoming embarrassment of being different from the majority culture was a common social challenge while being trilingual was a common accomplishment for these students. Academically, reading out-loud and speaking in class were the most common challenges. Graduating from the ESL Program and making a successful transition into mainstream classes was also a common accomplishment for some of the groups. In general, making cultural and language adjustments were common accomplishments for many of the students.

4.5: Overall Attitude and Ambitions

The students in the first group interviewed had an overall optimistic attitude. In general, their experiences in Canada and at the school have so far been positive. They believe that Canadians are very friendly and that it is easy to meet new people in Canada. They are also highly ambitious. Many want to go to either university or college. Specifically, there were two aspiring pharmacists, one teacher, one mechanical engineer, one computer engineer (college), one auto mechanic (work), one artist (painter), and one divided between going to university or college.

As with the first group, the students in the second group also had high ambitions. One student wishes to pursue a university degree in international business management, another wants to study law administration in college and then go onto university, there were two aspiring police officers, one construction mechanic, and one student who wants to have a general college degree.
The attitude and ambitions of the third group of student participants were also positive. Generally, they have a positive outlook on school, the ESL Program, and their own integration into the Canadian society. These students were also highly ambitious, as in the other groups. In contrast to their teacher's negative outlook and low expectations, these students want to be academically successful and pursue higher education. Five out of eight of the students would like to pursue university education in the following areas: law, dentistry, pharmacology, and two undecided. Two were undecided which college degrees to pursue while another student would like to begin work right after high school.

As in the other groups, the students in the fourth group had very positive and ambitious attitudes. They were determined, motivated, and focused on their future. Five out of ten desire to pursue ambitious university degrees. Four want to go to college, and one was undecided at the time of the interview. Specifically, they would like to become the following professionals: a psychiatrist, an orthodontist, a nurse, a computer engineer, an art teacher, a social worker, a pilot, a computer graphics designer, and a secretary.

Additionally, as in all of the other groups, the students in the fifth group were highly ambitious regarding their future. Five out of nine students wish to pursue university studies, while the other four, a college education. In particular, they want to study dentistry, medicine, mechanical and computer engineering, computer programming, science and languages.

Overall, most of the students in all of the groups had a positive attitude to school and learning, and were highly ambitious in terms of their future; they wanted to pursue either university or college degrees. Specifically, out of the forty one students interviewed, twenty one had clear goals of what programs they wish to pursue at the
university level, fifteen decided on a college education, and the rest were either undecided or wanted to make a transition directly into the workforce. On the whole, 87.8% (36 out of 41) students interviewed wanted to pursue higher education and had clear educational goals. As stated earlier, in the literature chapter, Foscolos (2000) also concluded with a similar finding where most of the successful students interviewed were highly ambitious and spoke of future university goals.

**Teachers**

The teachers had many interesting perceptions, opinions, and views about ESL teaching and ESL students. As with the students’ interviews, there were many shared themes that appeared throughout the teacher interviews. The major categories are grouped as follows: teaching strategies, ESL Program, ESL student’s academic and social integration, their greatest challenges and accomplishments, as well as the teachers’ overall attitude about and ambitions for ESL students.

**4.6: Teaching Strategies and (ESL Program)**

The first teacher interviewed uses a “three step approach” to ESL instruction: explain, do, and repeat. This teacher’s overall methodology in the lower ESL levels tends to be “teacher-centred”, but “student-centred” in the senior 4/5 levels.

According to teacher #1, the ESL Program covers all the levels of ESL acquisition and meets the needs of all students. For example, beginner students usually have an ELD (English Literacy Development) class paired with a Level 1 along with two mainstream classes. As the interviewee explains that with two ESL classes, students “...only have two classes in the day that are mainstream classes, and those two classes are sometimes religion and gym, somewhere where they could find a little bit of success...(Interview...
Transcript – Teacher #1). Specific recommendations relating to the ESL Program are to have a language computer listening lab so the students can work in their individual pace, a separate focused ESL department from English, an ESL department head, and an ideal ESL class size of fourteen to sixteen students.

The second teacher interviewee’s instructional methodology was not commented on; however, the interviewee did give informative examples of the advantages and disadvantages of the ESL Program. The main advantage of the program is that it is smaller than the program in the other school board and even from programs in other cities. Therefore, class sizes are smaller and thus provide opportunities to do more one-on-one instruction. ESL teachers have a closer collaborative relationship and can follow-up on student progress more efficiently. The main disadvantage is the school’s lack of funding and limited resources for ESL, “funding is limited within the school, not the school board since it is an inner-city school, it’s hard for people here to bring in that couple of dollars for excursions” (Interview Transcript – Teacher #2). The interviewee then gives examples of excursions such as historical tours and local museums where ESL students would have the opportunity to experience what it is like to be Canadian.

The third teacher interviewed mentioned an overall student centred approach to ESL teaching since the students “gear the pace of lessons in terms of how much they’re grasping the information” (Interview Transcript – Teacher #3). The teaching pace is a lot slower and sequential (divided into smaller parts) from mainstream classes with a focus on vocabulary definitions and explanations of terms and idioms.

The main advantage of the ESL Program, according to teacher #3, is that it is a strict program and therefore has more expectations in terms of the amount of work; if
students do not complete their schoolwork, then they are left behind and have to repeat. Also, the ESL Program provides a "safety-net" for ESL students where they feel more comfortable with new Canadian friends. The disadvantage of the program is its leniency and flexibility in terms of student repeats. This teacher believes that "if you don't have the work ethic or if your heart is not in ESL than you should not have the privilege to be in the ESL Program but go to essential English or general English mainstream classes" (Interview Transcript, Teacher #3).

Teacher #4's overall teaching methodology is a combination of a student and teacher centred approach. The approach is mostly visual where the teacher makes sure that everything is on the board and/or handouts. Each student is allowed to work at his/her own pace because of the different levels in one class. The students practice reading out-loud by volunteering and sometimes make fun of each other's accents as a joke to feel more comfortable. They have spelling quizzes on the board as a class (rewarded by candy) or with partners to ease their level of comfort and confidence. Specifically, this teacher noticed that Asian students prefer a stricter learning environment such as reading out of a book and not talking much and/or answering questions, while it is hard for Arab students to separate words in a sentence because they are not used to that form of writing.

Regarding the ESL Program, this teacher believes that the students have enormous advantages which include: having a jumpstart foundation to be successful in high school even if it takes an extra semester or two, being with peers in similar situations, and connecting with ESL teachers. There are, however, some disadvantages. For example, ESL students are too "clicky" and tend to "stick together" and are therefore
not sufficiently assimilated into different sports, classes, or social groups. Also, some students join the program half-way through the semester and know that they will have to audit the course, which can therefore decrease their motivation in trying their best.

The 5th interviewee has a well-developed teaching methodology. Generally, it is teacher-centred in lower levels, and student-centred in higher ones; however, the teacher recommends giving parameters and guidance to students on how to learn in this style. In higher levels the students are more comfortable and secure about talking with peers in English. The interviewee’s teaching strategies include a focus on oral interaction, peer-editing, incorporation of all skill areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, an interactive classroom with a focus on student participation where they “talk with a purpose”, and context teaching where, for example, vocabulary is learned from a reading passage. This teacher also believes in the “eye factor” of comprehensible input where the content is a little more challenging in order to motivate students, and “scaffolding” which is building on and adding to previous lessons. The concept of the “eye factor” directly relates with Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis theory where teachers are recommended to instruct one level beyond the learner’s competence, as stated in earlier literature (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Lightbown & Spada 2000). Her teaching is also very visual and kinaesthetic. Teacher #5 likes to use drawings with early learners to bring out vocabulary, and story telling, as well as picture dictionaries, translation dictionaries for beginners, and English dictionaries for advanced learners. Even though most of the students interviewed commented on the personal benefits of working in pairs and larger groups, this teacher interviewee prefers rote-type teacher-centred learning with a focus on memory work because of the disruptiveness caused by group activities.
However, teacher #5 mainly teaches the lower level ESL students, while the groups of students interviewed were either ESL Levels C or D (the highest levels).

The main advantage of the ESL Program, according to this teacher, is that it helps students to be successful by offering a full range of ESL courses. Recently, the program even added new English Language Literacy courses under the ELD (English Language Development) code. However, Teacher # 5 has some recommendations for improving the program. They include having more money, more staffing, a language lab, and more support for ESL students who are truly struggling and are not ready for grade nine. Also, having access to tests and personnel who would test the students’ proficiency in their first languages would be useful, as well as co-operative education for older ESL students.

Teacher #6 has a mostly teacher-centred approach incorporating some pair work but not a lot of group work activities. The interviewee likes to use animation in his teaching methodology, which he describes as: lots of hand signals, gestures, acting, and drawings on board. This teacher also teaches at a slower pace and is more procedural; making sure students understand one thing before going on to the next. Pair work such as peer-tutoring is common between same native language students for translation purposes, while only English is spoken class during conversations. Teacher #6 uses a hands-on approach rather than pure lectures since “it’s hard for them to process the language and make the associations” (Interview Transcript, Teacher #6). The interviewee also prefers to use pictures, make word associations, give handouts and notes. He also favours building and using concrete models with ESL students.

The interviewee mentioned some advantages, disadvantages, as well as recommendations regarding the school’s ESL Program. According to Teacher #6, the
main advantage of the ESL Program is that "it has good teachers who teach ESL courses every semester so they know how to gear material towards the students, whereas in other schools there may only be two ESL students in a class who are left behind". On the other hand, the interviewee believes that the main disadvantage is that kids only practice English in the classroom. As soon as they are out of the classroom environment, they find their native speakers of their first language in the hallways, outside of school, and in the community and therefore do not have sufficient English practice. Whereas in schools that do not have ESL Programs, students have to practice English outside of the classroom since there are not as many ESL speakers in their overall school environment. The interviewee’s recommendation for the program is that it should have 2 levels of ESL science since he finds the teaching pace to be even slower than in the applied science class.

The last teacher participant also has a mixed teaching methodology composed of both, teacher and student-centred activities. This teacher also likes to implement peer tutoring between students of the same native language. Teacher #7 uses more of a visual approach with ESL students because he believes that most people are visual learners. The teacher uses many hands-on examples and has a strategy of modelling, reproducing, and applying the examples. In general, teacher #7 has a teaching philosophy of "creating a successful environment for all students".

According to this teacher, the ESL Program is great. It gives students the basics at Level 1, and once all the levels are completed, students should be functioning as well as all the other students in the school. Teacher #7 recommends more classes and expansion of the program for example, an ESL math class.
In sum, most of the teachers commented that they had an overall student-centred approach in the higher advanced levels while having a teacher-centred approach was more suitable in the lower level classes. Context teaching, especially with grammar, and scaffolding (building on pre-taught language), with vocabulary development, were also teaching techniques commented on by the fifth teacher interviewed. The last two teachers provided rich feedback regarding their specific teaching methodologies and techniques. Both teachers have a very visual approach to ESL teaching that includes using pictures, drawings, hand signals, and gestures. These teachers also commented that they prefer to add kinaesthetic activities by incorporating acting and hands-on modelling. The fifth teacher interviewed also likes to use picture dictionaries for the lower level students and monolingual for the higher-level students. The last teacher interviewee has an overall procedural style of instruction where he focuses on the process and quality of student comprehension. Many of the teachers interviewed also mentioned teaching at a slower pace by breaking down terms and definitions. The majority of teachers (five out of seven) also commented how their use of peer-tutoring and partner activities creates more success and comfort for ESL students.

The teacher participants also commented on advantages and disadvantages of the ESL Program. The first teacher believes that the ESL Program meets the needs of all students by covering all of the different language acquisition levels and by having ESL classes paired up with mainstream classes, such as religion or gym, where the students can be successful. Another advantage includes the size of the program; it is smaller than the ones in other schools and allows more focus on individual students’ needs. Other academic advantages include the fact that ESL teachers collaborate with each other and
can follow up on student progress, and that it is a strict program with high expectations of
students providing them with a strong foundation to succeed in mainstream classes.
Socially, the program provides a safety net for ESL students where they feel comfortable
and close with each other and their ESL teachers; however, this also acts as a
disadvantage since it impedes their integration process into the wider Canadian society.
Another disadvantage according to one of the teachers is that ESL students practice
English only in the classroom, while in other schools without such a program English
language learners have to use their English outside the classroom as well. Common
recommendations throughout the interviews included: having a computer language
laboratory where students can develop their individual language acquisition needs at a
slower pace, more ESL funding for resources and excursions, ESL personnel such as
qualified staff who can access the students’ first language proficiency and skills, and
expansion of subject-specific ESL classes, for example, another level of ESL science,
ESL math, etc. Other recommendations included having a separate ESL department with
a department head, a co-operative education programs for older ESL students and a
smaller class size of ideally twelve to fourteen students.

4.7: Academic and Social Integration, Greatest Challenges and Accomplishments

The academic and social integration of ESL students is very good according to the
first teacher. Students feel confident once they complete the ESL Level 5; however,
lower levels are sometimes socially isolated because of their lack of language skills;
therefore, they tend to stick together. Teacher #1 believes that the greatest challenges
faced by ESL students are most of all: graduating the ESL Program, overcoming
Canadian culture shock, and adjusting to student-centred teaching styles.
In terms of social and academic integration, the second teacher does not see any major problems. Socially, ESL students may have initial difficulties, but after a couple of days they find friends and/or someone to pair-up with in class. Besides the language barrier, the interviewee does not see any other integration challenges into the Canadian educational system. The major accomplishment, which is also a challenge, is to complete every level and to acquire the necessary language skills and knowledge that each level requires. Other accomplishments include: understanding the language within a mainstream class, understanding jokes and sarcasm, just “getting by” without necessarily achieving high scores of 80s and 90s, and being accepted by the other non-ESL students.

Teacher #3 had strong viewpoints regarding ESL students’ integration. In general, the third teacher interviewee believes that ESL students have a socially comfortable ESL environment. In fact, the interviewee believes that the convenience of this ESL “safety-net” is in reality detrimental to the ESL students’ learning because they do not give their 100% since they are afraid to transfer into the mainstream classes. The students are not sufficiently socially integrated since they are “too comfortable” in their ESL environment which is too accommodating for them rather than being assimilating. The teacher believes that ESL language classes should only be offered to newcomers, whereas other ESL classes should be eliminated. The teacher states:

They’re very comfortable. And unfortunately, in my opinion, um... I think they should assimilate more, I really do. And sometimes, I think, we could be too accommodating because we offer, we wanna offer ESL math, ESL science, ESL art, everything ESL... well, there’s got a be a point where, you know, instead of accommodating, they should assimilate because, you know, the real world is not separated into ESL and mainstream (Interview Transcript – Teacher #3).
This teacher also believes that ESL students have a “vacation” type attitude when they are in her class. She states that some students feel they are too good for the ESL program and that is why they do not do the work, according to the interviewee, they expect the marks to be given to them just like everything else was when they first arrived in Canada. Regarding the ESL students’ assimilation into mainstream classes as opposed to ESL classes, the interviewee believes that they feel more isolated and made fun of because of their accents. Socially, the teacher further states that boys and some girls are integrated into sports such as soccer and basketball, but not into any other extra-curricular/after-school programs; never in student councils, pep rallies, etc. According to teacher #3, this type of involvement depends on the personality of the student rather than on nationality. However, the researcher believes that a student’s lack of confidence and language skills in an English dominated school setting plays a significant role in the development of his/her extroverted personality, which was not commented on by the teacher.

Academically, ESL students learn certain terms in ESL classes that they can apply in other classes, for example, specific scientific terminology. They are also invited and open to ask questions regarding all subjects including math homework. They are easily frustrated when they are left alone to read something, and when there is insufficient explanation on the teacher’s part. Their main academic challenges include: making connections in their reading and being able to discuss real life situations in class, making associations between concepts and words, logical reasoning and making grammatical connections, for example, “subject and predicate” behind everything they know. Socially, the interviewee believes that ESL students face many challenges when adjusting to the Canadian way of life. These challenges include realizing that everything will not
be easily given to them, that they have to work hard to overcome their laziness, as well as
that one day they will have to be independent. However, in the researcher's view, these
"realizations" can also be easily applied to non-ESL or Canadian students. Teacher #3
also feels that ESL students need to be less self conscious about their accents.

Teacher #4 believes that socially, ESL students tend to stick together because they feel a bit isolated. Specifically, "they feel like outcasts at the beginning, so it's important for them to meet other ESL students who are going through the same thing and cling on to them in the mainstream classes" (Interview Transcript, Teacher #4). Further, the interviewee believes that because of the diverse environment, students are more tolerant; however, "the ESL kids are more likely to make fun of each other and their different ethnicities" (Interview Transcript, Teacher #4). This statement differs from the beliefs of students where they felt that the Canadian students and not other ESL students were the ones who made fun of them.

In terms of their academic integration, ESL classes provide basic learning skills for integration into mainstream classes. Further, this teacher believes that ESL students feel frustrated when they see others excel and catch up earlier than them. They experience social challenges when they feel peer-pressure to fit in and be like "normal" kids (Interview Transcripts, Teacher #4). Some of their accomplishments include getting through the first day and becoming "well-rounded" while excelling at things.

Socially, teacher #5 believes that minority cultures feel very isolated and form separate social groups. Especially since this is a multicultural school, these students feel comfortable with someone who speaks their language and is from their culture. In general, they are very helpful, friendly, and kind to each other. Their social obstacles,
however, include having no peer/friend support and growing up quickly. Their
carefree youth is taken away since they have to learn a new language, grow up fast, and
help their parents, while never wanting to come to Canada because it was their parents’
wish. Their greatest accomplishments include “fitting in”, learning a new language and
culture; in general, to feel comfortable and be successful in their new environment.

Overall, teacher #5 believes that academic integration is a bit more challenging.
The students enter a brand new educational system with a different and challenging
curriculum, a foreign Canadian marking system, and a language barrier to overcome.
Ontario’s educational system is focused more at thinking and application of knowledge,
as well as on communication skills, but most ESL students, according to this interviewee,
are used to regurgitation. As she states below:

Their challenges are they’re facing a brand new educational system, ok, that’s
unfamiliar to many of them. Um...the challenge of a language, um...the
challenge of the delivery of um...of curriculum is completely different. The
challenge of the way we mark our students here, completely differently than how
we mark them...how they were marked back home. Back home, um...as long as
they were able, truly, to regurgitate, and it’s a very um...knowledge based
curriculum back home. You know it, you can tell it back, you’ve done well.
We’ve changed our focus so much in Ontario, in which we’re looking at thinking,
we’re looking at applying what you know, we’re looking at good communication,
of course knowledge as well but that’s no the most important thing (Teacher
Transcriptions, Teacher #5).

In terms of academic integration, teacher #6 believes that ESL students are ready
to enter the main academic stream only if they pass his science course and all of the ESL
levels required of them. They experience a positive social integration with “Canadian”
students because ESL and Canadian students learn from and about each other. Their
overall educational experience is “well-rounded and good”; however, they may need a
quicker academic integration into the classes.
Teacher #6 also describes some challenges and accomplishments of ESL students. The greatest challenges are new scientific terminology, and describing processes/concepts where the steps involved are complicated to understand since the students do not understand the first word of the process. The interviewee believes that ESL students also tend to spell words as they sound not as they are written. Teaching them science while they are learning English is challenging since “it is like learning two languages at once”, Teacher #6 says. They also have problems with English translation and are weak in writing skills, sentence structure and spelling. Their accomplishments would be finding a job because of non-proficient language skills and being a part of a social community outside of the school.

Finally, teacher #7 believes that integration at this school is a unique experience because of the different cultures that exist. Socially, the interviewee does not see any problems because of the multicultural environment. There are many ESL students in a mainstream class; therefore, they do not experience isolation. However, this view contrasts with that of the previous interviewees’, as many of them believe that ESL students do experience isolation, especially at the beginning of their integration into the Canadian school system. Academically, as teacher #6 stated, teacher #7 also believes that after passing all the ESL classes and this computer ESL class, ESL students are ready for regular English classes.

The interviewee also mentioned examples of challenges and accomplishments for ESL students. The main challenge is learning the language since English is not a phonetic language such as Italian. Other challenges include: reading and comprehension, as well as understanding difficult vocabulary in texts; i.e. in articles or newspapers.
"ESL students must develop confidence and a stepping-stone, so they can succeed just as any other students" (Interview Transcripts, Teacher #7). Other accomplishments mentioned by Teacher #7 are overcoming the language barrier, and completing English language classes in the ESL Program (not computer or geography) in order to successfully integrate into the mainstream classes.

In general, teachers believe that the students’ overall educational integration is a successful, positive, and well-rounded one; however, initial isolation exists because of insufficient or lack of language skills. Most teachers agree that ESL classes provide students with academic skills they can apply in their mainstream classes. Another common theme mentioned by many teachers was how the school’s multicultural environment positively affects student integration. This diverse school setting creates a more tolerant and accepting attitude of ESL students where students are helpful and kind to each other while learning about each other’s differences and similarities. Overall, the students’ integration is a unique experience because of the richness and diversity of cultures. However, the third teacher provided interesting viewpoints on this issue. She felt that, overall, the ESL Program was over accommodating for students and that it provided an environment where students felt too comfortable and safe. This type of a secure classroom atmosphere results in insufficient work effort in ESL classes since ESL students are afraid to transfer into mainstream classes, according to the teacher.

Many accomplishments and challenges surfaced through the interview process. Common accomplishments mentioned by teachers were for ESL students graduating from the Program, and high school in general; these accomplishments also corresponded with the students’. Other challenges included being accustomed to the student-centred
approach to teaching and learning, being accepted by non-ESL peers, making a successful transition into academic mainstream classes, learning new technical vocabulary and making grammatical connections, differentiating between spelling and phonetics, finding jobs and becoming a part of a social community outside the school environment.

4.8: Attitude and Ambitions

Overall, Teacher #1’s attitude towards ESL students is very positive. The interviewee is proud of ESL students and feels that they are quite eager and motivated to learn. This teacher’s ambitions for ESL students are: to successfully complete the ESL program so they can eliminate the “ESL cloud” over their heads, to find their happiness and become successful in life, and to be an integral part of Canadian society. According to the teacher, most of these students are college bound and only about 10% of all of the school’s students are university bound. However, teacher #1 tends to label ESL students as “they” when differentiating between “we” (the teachers), and “them” (the students), which tends to have an isolating undertone instead of the “us” perspective. This type of exclusion of ESL students was further confirmed by the researcher’s own observation. For example, as the researcher witnessed in the first teacher’s class, an ESL student came to see her teacher during the break and said that she was being indirectly looked down upon by a non-ESL student who said “ESL students are treated differently because “they” are in ESL”. The non-ESL student meant that ESL kids are excused from certain things and that teachers have lower expectations of them.

Teacher #2 also has an overall positive attitude towards ESL learners with ambitions that really depend on individual goals of each student. However, the
interviewee specified that many go on to post-secondary education, mostly college than university. The only inconsistency found in this interview was that this teacher had overall higher expectations of ESL students from the other teachers. She specified that about 25% of ESL students would go to college, which was a significantly higher statistic than the other teachers stated. They believed that a much lower percentage of ESL students would continue post-secondary education.

On the other hand, teacher #3’s overall attitude towards and ambitions for ESL students tends to be somewhat negative. This teacher states that ESL students are “too comfortable” in their ESL classes and therefore do not give their one hundred percent since they are afraid to go to mainstream classes. The interviewee also believes that some students feel they are too good for the ESL program and that is why they do not do the work, “they expect the marks to be given to them just like everything else was spoon fed and given to them when they came to Canada”. Interestingly, this teacher’s students also noticed her negative attitude as one of them commented hearing the teacher say that ESL students should not think they are in their native countries and do “whatever they want” (Student Interview Transcripts, Group 3: Student A). According to teacher #3, ESL students who fail are often “lazy” and have “poor work ethics”; “they feel a sense of entitlement to be in the class, in Canada, as if “teachers owe them something, they’re too embarrassed to be in the course in the first place, so when it comes to do the work, they don’t, they’d rather focus on math or science”. Overall, this interviewee does not have high expectations for ESL students. Teacher #3 is worried about them because of their poor work ethic; “they want to go to college or university but don’t have the marks”.

However, the researcher believes that this is a generalization since non-ESL students may
also have poor work ethics. Further, the interviewee states that “they have a sense of arrogance that they will get into university or college” and believes that ESL students are more suited for the work world; but even then, the interviewee states that “they don’t work in my class and show up late”. Clearly, as in the second teacher’s interview, this teacher also classifies ESL students in the “they” category. This distinction therefore labels the students and distances them from other students as well as from teachers. Instead, ESL students should feel as an integral part of the classroom community where teachers refer to them with a “we” or “us” attitude.

The interviewee also made some contradictory statements. For example, she states that a lot of ESL students have the work ethic but laziness really holds them back and then states that they lack work ethic and are lazy. This teacher also states that ESL students “don’t see that I’m trying to get them to comprehend, but what frustrates me and them is when they expect me to spoon feed them” (Interview Transcripts, Teacher #3). Overall, the researcher found that teacher #3 had an intimidating tone of voice and negative attitude towards ESL students.

In contrast, Teacher #4 has an empathetic attitude to ESL students’ overall situation and experience. For example, the interviewee states the following: “So I have a really nice bunch of kids, ... I feel for them trying to fit in... you know...our culture’s so different for many of them” (Interview Transcripts, Teacher #4). This teacher feels more psychologically responsible for ESL kids and even compares herself to a mother figure. She also believes that ESL students are more mature than the average high school student because they have gone through more difficult experiences. The interviewee has high ambitions for ESL students by believing that the majority of them will become
successful, "whether it's college, trade, or beyond, they are determined kids, they're
gonna fight" (Interview Transcripts, Teacher #4). The teacher also seems to have an
understanding of how difficult second language acquisition is compared to other subjects
as in the following statement: “You know, I feel bad for them, because languages are
hard to learn, not systematic like other things”.

Teacher #5 also has a generally positive and sensitive attitude towards ESL
students believing that they are hard working and very sincere. Her ambitions for ESL
students are, most of all, to successfully integrate inside and outside of the school
environment.

Overall, the sixth teacher interviewee also has high expectations for and a positive
attitude towards ESL students. He believes that ESL students can go to college and
university; it just might take them longer to get there, it depends how hard they work at
understanding and learning the language. ESL students in this class want to be mainly
doctors, engineers, and lawyers.

Finally, teacher #7’s overall attitude towards ESL students is very positive. The
interviewee referred to students (ESL and non-ESL) as people, not “them”, and believes
that ESL students are as equally capable to learn as non-ESL students. This teacher’s
attitude is the same towards non-ESL students and states that “‘ESL’ is only a label; they
are regular students but just have different goals”. Teacher #7 also believes in creating a
successful environment, as also suggested by Meeks and Jewkes (2003), for all students
while making the necessary accommodations for certain students who need them. An
example of one accommodation would be shortening a three-page assignment into one
page for a limited proficiency student. Teacher #7 also has many ambitions for ESL
students. The interviewee believes that most of these students will go to college (10 or 12 out of 17), the rest will go into the work force, and maybe a couple to university. Most importantly, this teacher hopes for every ESL student to be successful and become a productive member of society.

To summarize, teachers had an overall positive attitude and high ambitions for their ESL students. Many teachers believed that ESL students would continue higher education, most at a college and some at a university level. Except for teacher #3, as she had a somewhat negative attitude towards and low ambitions for ESL students. However, the students held higher ambitions for a university education than their teachers. More than half of the students interviewed (21/41) wanted to pursue a university degree while only 15 out of 41 had their goals set on a college level education. Overall, most teachers were empathetic towards ESL students and their experiences, and also felt more responsible for them. Some commented that ESL students were hard working and determined to accomplish their goals even though these goals may take them longer to achieve.

4.9: Student Age (Teachers and Students)

A number of students and teachers also commented on student age. Teacher #1 mentioned having some older students in classes, and even a twenty-year old student in a Level 1 class. In contrast to one teacher's comment that "some students are too old and do not belong in a high school environment" (Interview Transcript, Teacher #5), students in group #1 believe they like mixed age groups in classes since they feel that they can learn from each other. Teacher #5 also stated that these older students "feel like they belong in a specific class because they want to complete it, but unfortunately, this may
never happen” (Interview Transcript, Teacher #5). However, Teacher #6 stated that having older students is “ok” and even beneficial for them since “older kids feel more in control and help out the younger ones” (Interview Transcript, Teacher #6). The remaining teachers had no significant comments regarding this issue. Students in group #3 commented extensively on student’s age and had an interesting range of viewpoints on the issue. They think that 19 should be the age limit at Level 4, and 16 at Level 1. They also stated that they should receive transfer credits for high school courses completed in their home countries to enable them to faster complete their Canadian high school education. Here is an excerpt from their insightful discussion on this topic:

Student C: It doesn't matter the age but some of them are like 18 years old and they are still in level one. How are they gonna finish high school, you know?

Researcher: Maybe you can help them more?

Student C: Well how? If, like, each year, only you take 2 levels right, and other classes, how would you understand the other classes if you cannot understand English?

Researcher: So, you think there isn’t much hope for them?

Student C: Well, you can only study till like you’re 21, right, and they’re 18, if they study for 2 years, they won’t finish high school in 2 years, you know.

Researcher: So you think that maybe there should be an age limit?

Student C: Yeah, I think like 19.

Researcher: At what level?

Student C: 19 at like level 4 not level 1.

Researcher: What about in a Level 1, what do you think the age limit should be?

Student C: 16.
**Student D:** I think that everyone should get a chance, it doesn’t matter how old are they. Give them a chance, let them learn English. I know some people are like 24 or something and still go to high school.

**Researcher:** Sometimes people come to Canada when they’re already 18 or 19, right? So, and they have to start at the first level.

**Student C:** I think that when you get older, like 21 years old, you should go to another school.

**Researcher:** So you think that’s something you would like to change in the program?

**Student C:** Yeah.

**Student H:** What about if you didn’t finish high school in your own country, they like, the only thing is, how can I say that, you have to, like, repeat the high school here too, they’re not gonna say, ok, go to university or college. You have to have,

**Researcher:** Maybe not repeat the whole high school, but maybe uh... just some English classes, that will help you.

**Student H:** Well, they say to me that if I go to high school in my country, it’s not gonna help, I have to go here again.

**Student A:** Like repeat the whole thing?

**Student H:** I guess so. I didn’t go for first year in my country, so I stayed home, then when I get here, like I had to start from the beginning.

**Researcher:** So, you think that maybe some of those courses should be transferred?

**Student H:** Yeah.

**Student D:** Yeah, I think if you study in Europe, and you come like here, you should like, they should be transferred (Student Interview Transcripts, Group #3).

### Summary of Findings

Overall, there were minimal disagreements between teachers and students’ views of the specific themes that emerged from the study. In general, students’ learning preferences matched the teachers’ instructional strategies; most of the participants in both
groups (students and teachers) agreed that they prefer individual or pair work activities as opposed to group work. But, many students also commented that they like to work in teams to complete assignments and/or projects and that these types of activities are beneficial in providing a comfortable learning environment where they are unafraid to express their opinions while speaking with accents. Whereas the teachers preferred to mostly implement individual or partner activities, specifically, peer-tutoring. However, even though many teachers commented that they use a student-centred approach, which includes partner activities, the researcher only noticed this in one out of the five classes observed. The researcher did not notice any other significant differences between the participants’ perceptions because of limited observation time.

There were only few unexpected results in this study. Surprisingly, some student participants did have unpredicted comments regarding the ESL Program Levels. They felt that the highest level, Level D, was a “waste of time” for them and that they would rather use this time in a mainstream non-ESL class to accelerate their integration process from ESL to “regular” classes. This finding is consistent with that of Kanno and Applebaum (1995), as cited in Foscolos (2000), where international students had a negative outlook on ESL classes, could not see how these classes connected with mainstream ones, and saw them as remedial and an obstacle to their overall school integration. Another surprise was to hear how students requested having more schoolwork. Most students wanted to have more projects, assignments, and homework, as well as additional academic after school programs. This proves that, in general, ESL students are hard working and highly ambitious, as many of them had a positive attitude and high motivation to have a successful future as also stated by Foscolos (2000). These
positive ambitions contrasted with views of teacher #3 and teacher #1 who had rather low expectations of ESL students in terms of higher education. Teacher #3 had an overall strong assimilatory attitude and believed that the ESL Program is over-accommodating for students who possess an extremely low, lazy, and poor work ethic, while the rest of the teachers interviewed had rather positive attitudes and high expectations for the future of ESL students. Teachers #4 and #5 even mentioned that ESL students are more mature and ambitious because of the experiences they had to overcome.

Most students also felt that the ESL Program at this particular high school provided them with an essentially comfortable and productive learning environment. Meeks and Jewkes (2003) state that a literacy or second language-learning environment is a risk-free environment where students should be fearless to ask questions, attempt tasks, and make mistakes. This environment also makes students realize that learning is not a talent or intelligence but acquiring specific skills by completing tasks. Students understand that their effort is expected in order for them to be successful. In a literacy-learning environment students are responsible for their own learning. This is the type of academic and social setting that most of the interviewed students and teachers described.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study has focused on the perceptions of a particular sample consisting of forty-one ESL students and seven of their teachers regarding the students' overall high school experiences, including learning preferences, academic and social integration, challenges and accomplishments, and future ambitions. The above thematic categories discussed by the primary and secondary samples of participants are explored in previous findings (Chapter IV) and can be summarized in the following theory:

**Proposed Theory (Argument):** ESL students' learning experience is affected by how they perceive their ESL Program, academic and social integration, their greatest challenges and accomplishments, and overall attitude and ambitions. These factors also determine their academic and social needs.

Both groups of participants had informative views and opinions providing rich and knowledgeable data for the study. The students' and teachers' voices gave valuable insights into what constitutes successful English Second Language instruction and students' experiences. This study's goal was to answer the initial research questions that essentially aimed to identify ESL high school students' academic and social needs by exploring their learning experiences. Differences and similarities in how ESL students perceive their overall learning experiences compared to their teachers' views, were also examined. During the data collection process and analysis of the findings, categorical themes, from both samples of participants, emerged to help identify ESL student's academic and social needs through an examination of their overall learning experiences.
Both groups of participants, the students and teachers, identified how difficulties in (initial) social integration of minority cultures, positive effect of the school’s multicultural environment on students, creating an audit limit, and scarcity of resources and facilities have an affect on their overall learning experiences while addressing their academic and social needs. The participants also commented on how advantages in peer tutoring and having a favourable class size address their learning needs. As these findings emerged in the study they were grouped into themes and are addressed as recommendations in this chapter. This chapter will also discuss directions for future ESL research.

Common Themes and Recommendations From Student and Teacher Interviews

5.1 Struggles with Initial Social Integration

There were several overlapping and common themes between the students and teachers’ narratives. First was the issue of initial social integration of minority cultures. Both samples of participants felt that minority language students experience a double social integration challenge. First, is within the broader Canadian context, and second, within the smaller ESL environment at the school where certain cultures dominate over others. However, this turned out to be a positive experience for one Russian student in the first focus group interview. He stated that because of his minority culture among other prominent cultures dominating the ESL environment (for example, Arabic, and African), he was able to integrate quicker within the Canadian culture and made more Canadian friends. This finding is consistent with Kanno and Applebaum (1995) as cited in Foscolos (2000), where Japanese students who wanted to make Canadian friends had higher motivation to learn English than those who only wanted to befriend other Japanese
students. In general, students and teachers felt that it did not take them long to make friends in the study's site; however, most of them felt lonely and isolated because of their lack of language skills. Even after the initial integration, feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and alienation remain. Some students (and teachers) feel that their status as "ESL" learners implies that they should be treated differently from other students. This experience of difference and isolation delays their process of integrating into the larger dominant cultural environment.

5.2 Positive Effect of Multicultural Environment

Another common topic of discussion for both, students and teachers was the multicultural environment of the school. As stated by Cummings (1983), just because schools do not teach students' native languages, minority languages should nevertheless be valued and respected. Teachers should value minority languages through intercultural respect. This respect clearly exists at the study site where an appreciation for diversity is present. The multicultural environment at this school helps to minimize the initial North American/Canadian culture shock experienced by most immigrant students. They are more socially comfortable in this type of surrounding and can speak English with students from other cultures without the fear of being made fun of because of their accents or limited language skills. The school's multicultural environment embraces diversity and provides them with a rich intercultural education. They learn about each other's cultures, traditions, customs, worldviews, and beliefs while gradually developing their own new Canadian identity within a school culture that respects diversity and is sensitive to multicultural student needs. This type of approach to education should therefore reduce embarrassment and initiate students' pride of their ethnic backgrounds.
while developing a new sense of identity in the Canadian social context. However, as analyzed in the above initial social integration section, most ESL students experience isolation, embarrassment, and segregation at some point during their integrative journey into the Canadian school system and society. On average, students who participated in the study took about one to two months to make friends. This finding contradicts most of the teachers’ views where they felt that ESL students integrated more rapidly, within a few weeks period. Interestingly, in one group, a student commented that it only took him two days and that the multicultural environment of the school helped. Overall, the multicultural environment of the school creates a positive school culture, social comfort, and intercultural learning. It also embraces diversity by forming multicultural friendships.

5.3 Auditing Limit

Auditing was also a common theme in the students’ interviews as in the teachers’. Students in the second group believe that after repeating a level for the third time, the student should be considered unsuitable for high school. However, sometimes this student may not be at the required English proficiency level for that specific class. These students think that failing twice should be the limit. Students in the third group commented that there should also be a two to three times limit for repetition. Auditing classes was also a prevalent theme among the teachers. Teacher #1 believes that students repeat in the lower levels because they lack skills, and in the advanced levels because of laziness and bad work ethics. This teacher states that sometimes repetition is imperative:

...simply because, if they don’t have the foundation, it’s like math, if you can’t add, you can’t do the problems that are after that. If these students don’t understand sentence patterns, where subjects and verbs are, how are they gonna right sentences, paragraphs, and essays? It’s impossible (Interview Transcript – Teacher #1).
Teacher #2 states that repetition is “not a big deal” at this school since students do not seem to care about repeating; however, they are made fun of initially for having to repeat a class. Nevertheless, the teacher believes that there should be an audit limit. “After the second repetition the students should be either moved along or tested because it might not just be a language barrier but maybe a learning disability and so we are doing them an injustice by keeping them in the same class” (Interview Transcript, Teacher #2). The third teacher believes in 2-3 times limit and states that the cause of auditing is sometimes laziness or a work ethic problem, or sometimes a mental processing deficiency, where some students are slower than others, carrying this problem over from their own countries. The auditing limit for teacher #4 is two times; however, she also believes that ESL students need more time learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture outside of the classroom. Two out of seven teachers have a more flexible view of student repetition and believe that auditing should really depend on individual students and their needs. However, the teacher # 5 states that, in general, repetition is more helpful to younger students so they can benefit by more practice while older students are passed on because of their age. Teacher #6 believes that ESL students should repeat if necessary, especially the ESL science class. It is more beneficial for them academically than socially; however, it is not as detrimental as in elementary school where students have to repeat the whole year. In high school, they only repeat certain courses. Finally, teacher #7 believes that the cause of auditing is not laziness but incapability or intellectual limitations, while whether or not there should be a limit to repeating classes would have to depend on each individual student. Most of the students and teachers interviewed
believe that there should be an audit limit. The teachers speculate that ESL student failure can be attributed to poor work ethics, intellectual limitations or learning disabilities. Bennett (2003) inquires if student failure is due to intellectual development deficiency or social struggles of integration. The deficit argument of student failure focuses on problems in cognitive development and opposes the multicultural philosophy of education and the “belief that teachers can accommodate cultural and individual diversity in the classroom while maintaining high levels of academic achievement and personal development among students” (Bennett, 2003, p. 243). The interviewed teachers in this study may have certain assumptions about the cause of ESL student failure, which results in negative biases about ESL students’ learning capabilities, habits, and work ethics. These negative beliefs may poorly reflect on ESL students and their self-esteem and motivation and as a result attribute to their school failure. As Bennett (2003) states, teachers cannot have certain assumptions about minority students and expect them to act and perform in a certain way. Instead, teachers should take the initiative to find out about their students’ cultures so they can better interpret students’ cultural differences from school expectations.

5.4 Lack of Resources and Facilities, ESL Staff Shortage

Another common theme to both students and teachers was school resources. Most teachers and some students suggested having a language computer laboratory where students can practice individual pronunciation and grammar activities. This individual computer instruction would also facilitate their comfort level as well as ease their embarrassment and self-consciousness when dealing with fears of reading out loud and presenting in class. Some teachers also commented that the school needs more money
and resources for ESL materials, as well as funding for additional educational and integrative experiences outside the classroom, such as cultural fieldtrips and events. Additionally, some of the teachers also mentioned the need for more qualified ESL teachers and staff. Teacher #5 even suggested having staff who are qualified to accurately access ESL students’ proficiency and level in their first languages. This finding is consistent with earlier mentioned Chomsky’s (1980) language acquisition device (L.A.D.) theory, where mastering literacy skills in a student’s first language is necessary to process and acquire any additional languages.

Untrained professionals and scarcity of resources are major concerns in ESL education. As previously stated in Chapter II, according to a 1997 study in James Madison University, Virginia, more experienced personnel, better prepared professionals as well as more resources were determined as some of the greatest needs in ESL Programs. Short and Echevarria (2005) suggest that school success of English language learners requires implementing high-quality, consistent, sheltered instruction; however, many content-area teachers do not have sufficient training in second language acquisition. The authors believe that by having the appropriate training, teachers can help English language learners succeed in school by mastering academic content and developing literacy skills. Even though only four out of the seven teacher participants in this study were qualified or partially qualified ESL teachers, the other three seemed to have adequate knowledge of teaching methodologies in second language acquisition. For example, Teacher #7 did not have any ESL qualifications but demonstrated an understanding of the language learning and acquisition process, most likely because of his trilingual knowledge and skills. Teacher #4 could not explicitly label her teaching
methodology as grammar based, but she did state that she focuses on basic reading and sentence structure, “Yeah, it’s not grammar focused, it’s just the basic of learning how to read and the language structure as in like he is, he’s, there, their, they’re, you know that sort of thing. The basics” (Interview Transcript, Teacher #4).

As mentioned before, most of the teachers and some students interviewed commented on lack of and limited resources and facilities for ESL. They suggested language labs, extra materials, culturally integrative fieldtrips, as well as additional ESL classes and program expansion. This scarcity of resources and insufficient government funding is reflective of this situation in Ontario. As mentioned in Chapter II, Duffy’s (2003) study found that ESL students’ drop-out rates were two and a half times more than that of the general student population. Specifically in Ontario, out of 2,391 grade 10 ESL students who took the standardized literacy test, 67% failed. According to Brathwaite and James (1996), as cited in Cummins (1997), “African Canadian immigrant and second generation students, mostly of Caribbean origin, also experience high drop-out rates generally lower levels of academic success despite high academic aspirations” (p.412). In the greater Toronto area, Spanish and Portuguese speaking students also perform poorly in school (Royal Commission on Learning, 1995, as cited in Cummins, 1997). Myers (2003) also states that general ESL support has been reduced in the greater Toronto district region. 60% of local ESL school board programs have been eliminated, and cutbacks in ESL leadership are in the works. The above researchers clearly demonstrate, through their findings, the reality and academic struggles of Canadian minority students, especially in Ontario. These statistics and the study’s recommendations prove that there is a crucial need for Ontario’s Ministry of Education
and the local school board, where the study was conducted, to allocate more funding for ESL resources, specialized staff, and general support.

5.5 Ideal Class Size

All of the interviewees felt that ESL class size should be reduced. They felt that even eighteen to twenty ESL students are too many for a successful and productive language acquisition environment. The first three interviewed teachers suggested an ideal ESL class size between twelve and sixteen students. These teachers commented that by having a larger student population there are more extremes in one class, and that in a smaller class size, it is easier to conduct one-on-one student-teacher interaction and reach individual students' needs. A smaller class size also meant additional time for detailed marking in order to assess individual student progress more accurately, for the third teacher. This teacher believes that a smaller class is better for the lower ESL levels (A and B) since it is easier for the students to acquire language within a smaller group. However, she suggested sixteen to eighteen students for the higher levels (C, D and E) since having more students gradually prepares them for mainstream classes. The rest of the teachers stated that an ideal ESL class size should be between ten and fourteen students because of the various language proficiency levels. They believe that a class of eighteen or more hinders individual attention, participation, and language interaction for students who are not at the same language abilities and levels. Teacher #7 believes that twelve to thirteen is as an ideal number of mixed level students for individual consultation. Therefore, the average ESL class size suggested by all of the teachers interviewed turns out to be fourteen students, as compared to the existing eighteen to twenty, and the average thirty in non-ESL mainstream classes. During the process of
writing this thesis, the researcher was unable to locate current research on ESL class size; however, limited research findings of student class size in regular (mainstream) classes exist. Corak and Lauzon (2005) conducted a quantitative research study comparing the role of class size and time-in-term with high school achievement. One interesting finding of their study was that by having a standardized class size and same student-teacher ratio in every classroom, the proportion of students performing in the lowest reading proficiency level would increase. Therefore, it was found that schools in New Brunswick (one of the provinces researched in this study) have specific structures that change the standardized numbers of class sizes and address the needs of local student population. This finding is consistent with the researcher’s findings on ESL class size, where smaller classes address individual student needs and increase student success.

5.6 Peer Tutors

As mentioned earlier in Chapter II, Meeks and Jewkes (2003) note how peer-tutoring activities, especially in writing, improves student interaction and empowerment. Not only does peer-tutoring encourage student friendships and interaction, but also cooperative learning (Coehlo, 1994b as cited in Karanja, 2007; Falchikov, 2001; Bruffee, 1999). Research also shows that high school peer-tutors benefit teachers by providing extra help for ESL students. Peer-tutoring emphasizes the socio-cultural dimension of an interactive learning process with more knowledgeable peers or adults by: recognizing the ability of tutors, reinforcing understanding of tutored material, providing extra academic help for student who benefit from it, and reconstructing the whole school environment as a community of learners (Coehlo, 1994 as cited in Kranja, 2007). In this study, five out of seven teachers interviewed mentioned peer-tutoring activities. This theme reoccurred
in most of the interviews and was seen as an essential teaching strategy to use in creating a successful ESL learning environment. Teachers #1 and #4 prefer to group ESL students with stronger Canadian or same native language partners in the lower level classes since they believe that peer-tutoring not only enhances comprehension skills but also gives students a sense of empowerment and ownership. As literature states, giving students responsibility for their own learning creates a successful literacy-learning environment (Meeks & Jewkes, 2003). Teacher #5 also groups stronger with weaker students when doing peer-editing activities. The interviewee encourages translation in peer-tutoring (as also stated by teacher #4) as long as it is not used to the detriment of the class. The last two teachers interviewed are also strong believers in peer-tutoring and use this method quite extensively in the classroom. They group peer tutors according to same native languages, but at various levels. Additionally, in all of the student groups interviewed, many students also commented on and suggested peer-tutoring as a helpful learning preference in their language acquisition process. According to Falchikov (2001), besides creating positive academic performance outcomes, peer-tutoring also positively affects non-academic outcomes such as motivation, attendance, and retention of students. Metacognitive skills such as transferring learning and learning how to learn are also achieved through peer-tutoring, as well as good study habits. Finally, peer-tutoring creates interdependence among peers (Bruffee, 1999).

In addition to peer-tutoring activities and learning preferences, many students requested having more writing, especially essay structure practice. Meeks & Jewkes (2003) have pointed out the importance of guided writing techniques for promoting literacy skills and developing English academic abilities as well as for demonstrating to
students, the complexity of the writing process. The authors suggest that guided writing shows students how writers design the form of writing to support content, the process of writing and revising drafts, and the number of people involved in supporting the writer from first draft to a published copy. Collaborative work through peer editing also helps learners develop communication skills while focusing on academic tasks. Finally, guided writing takes place in a risk-free environment where the novice writer feels comfortable asking questions, practicing, and making mistakes.

Meeks & Jewkes (2003) also believe that the mentor-apprenticeship relationship in guided reading is an integral part of a literacy environment. The teacher models strategies and skills in order to create meaning from text. The student is given many opportunities to practice the reading skills before reading independently. Pedagogically, the teacher sets clear expectations by modelling the specific strategies and skills. Then, the students can practice these skills as they read. Students practice in small groups modelling the teacher's reading skills as they are comfortable making mistakes and asking for clarification. Most of the student participants in the conducted study stated that they feel comfortable to read and speak in a group setting and are not afraid of being made fun or being centred out in the class. Some teacher participants also commented on the social and academic benefits of group work for ESL students. This finding is consistent with current literature where cooperative learning increases student motivation, attitude, self-esteem, and social skills such as communication, conflict management, and sharing (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002).

The resulting themes from this study such as student age, auditing, and class size have not been sufficiently addressed in existing literature. Interestingly, students and
teachers overall, felt indifferent as to having an age limit in an ESL class. They also possessed a positive attitude in terms of auditing. Most participants felt that a limit of two to three audits was necessary as opposed to the existing limitless auditing policy. An ideal ESL class size of fourteen students was also a common agreement between the participants of the study, in contrast to the typical class of 25 to 30 students in regular mainstream classes.

Summary of Recommendations

Overall, based on the findings of this study, the following are specific recommendations for improving ESL education policies and practices:

- Schools, school boards and the Ontario Ministry of Education should provide more funding, resources and facilities, such as more ESL related curriculum materials and computer language laboratories in order to increase the success rates of ESL students.

- School boards and the Ontario Ministry of Education should provide more funding for extra-curricular activities such as cultural events and fieldtrips in the surrounding school community in order to facilitate the social integration process of ESL students.

- Schools should provide more intra-curricular activities including after school programs and peer-tutoring sessions in order to facilitate the academic integration of ESL students in a non-threatening comfortable environment where they are not afraid to make mistakes in front of their non-ESL peers.

- School boards should hire more ESL qualified teachers because of their expertise, knowledge and understanding of both, language acquisition theories, and social
integration issues; while the ministry should provide more financial support to ESL training and professional development.

- An ESL class should not exceed an ideal class size of 14 students; the lower the level of ESL, the lower the number of students in order to accelerate the language acquisition process and integration into mainstream classes.

- Schools should implement an "Audit Limit" as to a maximum of two times that ESL students are allowed to repeat a course; if a student fails twice, this means the student is not suitable for the specific class because of a possible learning disability or an improper ESL level placement; this should in turn free space for suitable students for that class.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of the study, several issues emerged that require future research attention. The main ones relate to differentiated learning and instruction, attitudes and teaching adjustments, multicultural sensitivity, teacher qualifications and professional development in ESL instruction, mainstream classroom teachers’ approach to ESL students, collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers, high school completion time factor for ESL students, academic preparation of ESL students (since many of them want to pursue post secondary education), helping ESL students overcome their isolation/confidence difficulties, balancing ESL between communicative (social skills) and academic purposes, and the educational value of ESL, bilingual, and second language learning. Specific questions regarding the above-mentioned issues and concerns include:
How have we as educators planned differentiated learning and how does this ensure that we hear all students’ voices in the classroom?

Are all teachers knowledgeable in instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students in a successful language-learning environment?

How can mainstream teachers help in improving and developing ESL students’ language skills in their classrooms?

How can mainstream teachers collaborate with ESL instructors in order to meet the needs of ESL students?

Are educators provided with sufficient professional development about ESL learning and teaching that they can implement in their classrooms?

To what extent do educators make a conscious effort to help ESL students to overcome their social and academic challenges inside and outside the classroom?

Are teachers culturally sensitive to and aware of the various backgrounds of ESL students and their learning styles?

Is there a successful and fair balance of ESL instruction for academic and communicative purposes?

Why do we seem to give a secondary value to ESL learning as compared with other second languages, for example, French and Spanish?

To what extent is second language learning valued in educational institutions?

Educational institutions are far from providing adequate answers to these questions. Therefore, it is crucial for educational research to increase in this knowledge area not only for the benefit of ESL students and their overall integration into the Canadian school system, but also for educators and pedagogues in order to enrich their...
knowledge and awareness of the teaching methodologies and social skills that help ESL students to integrate into our pluralistic Canadian society. As research has demonstrated, there is an overall higher drop-out rate among ESL students (especially in Ontario); however, this study proved that ESL students not only meet their teachers’ expectations but are deeply motivated to work hard and succeed in school, as also stated by Foscolos (2000). The findings of this study also suggest that there must be changes in the Canadian educational system and its policies to accommodate the needs of ESL students. An ESL Program such as the one examined in this study not only meets the academic needs of ESL students but also succeeds in facilitating their overall social integration within a multicultural high school environment, which in turn eases the students’ transition into the Canadian society. Programs such as this one in a southwestern Ontario high school should therefore be embraced and implemented into other schools where there are high percentages of ESL students in order to facilitate their overall integration process. As educators of future ESL generations, our attitudes also need to improve in order to accommodate the growing population of linguistically diverse students in our society. Foscolos (2000) recommends that we must first begin by valuing second language education. There must be a deeper social value of learning a second language, and the challenges that the language acquisition process entails. Especially, high schools should place a stronger emphasis on the intellectual and social value of bilingualism and language learning in general.
REFERENCES


Diaz-Rico L. T. & Weed, K.Z. (2002). The crosscultural, language, and academic


Letter Of Information For Consent To Participate In Research for Students Over 18

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**PROCEDURES**

The first week(s) will consist of my own observation and immersion into your classroom environment in order to establish a positive rapport with you and to later conduct the focus group interviews, which will form the primary source of data for the study. The secondary source of data in this study will be individual interviews and a focus group discussion between teachers and the researcher. The interview questions will focus on you teachers’ perceptions of your needs and your overall integration into high school. The demographic profile of student participants will include the following variables: gender, home country, grade level, number of years in Canada, first language, age, and current level of proficiency in English. The profile of the teacher participants will highlight the following: age, sex, nationality, native/ minority language(s), educational background and teaching experience. The typical class size is 15-18 ESL students. There will be two higher language proficiency classes asked to participate. A total of 41 ESL students and 7 ESL teachers will be asked to participate in the study. There will be no follow up sessions and you will remain anonymous.
POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

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PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Subjects will not receive compensation in any form for participating in this study.

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PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

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FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

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SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA
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Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study? □Yes □No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Linda Bunn, Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

__________________________________________  _______________________
Signature of Investigator                     Date
APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Letter Of Consent To Students Over 18

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POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

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SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study *Identifying language minority students' support needs in a diverse classroom environment: A case study of ESL high school students' perceptions of their experiences* as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

______________________________
Name of Subject

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Subject            Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

______________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Investigator        Date
Letter Of Information For Consent To Participate In Research For Parents Of Students Under 18

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**PROCEDURES**

The primary source of the data in this study will be the open-ended focus group interviews conducted and recorded with your child (children). The first week(s) will consist of my own observation and immersion into your child’s (children’s) classroom environment in order to establish a positive rapport with the ESL students and to later conduct the focus group interviews, which will form the primary source of data for the study. The secondary source of data in this study will be individual interviews and a focus group discussion between teachers and the researcher (me). The interview questions will focus on teacher perceptions of ESL students, their needs and their overall integration into high school. The demographic profile of student participants will include the following variables: gender, home country, grade level, number of years in Canada, first language, age, and current level of proficiency in English. The profile of the teacher participants will highlight the following: age, sex, nationality, native/ minority language(s), educational background and teaching experience. The typical class size is 15-18 ESL students. There will be two higher language proficiency classes asked to
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**PROCEDURES**

The first week(s) will consist of my own observation and immersion into your students’ classroom environment in order to establish a positive rapport with the ESL students and to later conduct the focus group interviews, which will form the primary source of data for the study. The secondary source of data in this study will be individual interviews and a focus group discussion between teachers and the researcher. The interview questions will focus on your perceptions of ESL students, their needs and their overall integration into high school. The demographic profile of student participants will include the following variables: gender, home country, grade level, number of years in Canada, first language, age, and current level of proficiency in English. The profile of the teacher participants will highlight the following: age, sex, nationality, native/ minority language(s), educational background and teaching experience. The typical class size is 15-18 ESL students. There will be two higher language proficiency classes asked to participate. A total of 41 ESL students and 7 ESL teachers will be asked to participate in the study. There will be no follow up sessions and you will remain anonymous.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

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There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, inconveniences, including for example, physical, psychological, emotional, financial and social, in this research.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants may feel positively about assisting other researchers and extending research in the area of education. This study addresses the unique condition of Windsor’s language minority students. The study will be of significant benefit to teachers and administrators since it may provide alternative approaches to traditional mainstreaming or take-out classes, such as transitional ESL programs. Most importantly, insights gleaned from the study will facilitate ESL students’ successful integration into the public education system and ultimately, into the Canadian society. Finally, this study aims at preserving a stimulating and productive learning environment for all.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Subjects will not receive compensation in any form for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be discarded when no longer needed.

You will not identify yourself with any personal contact information on the surveys. Anonymous data will be kept in a secure area. Access to this thesis paper can be made after the defence period sometime in the Summer of 2007 and the research results will only be available at the Leddy Library at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

Research findings will be available to the participants after the defence period and publication in the Leddy Library at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario.
SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will only be used in subsequent studies, if the participants comply to do so:

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study? [ ] Yes [ ] No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Linda Bunn, Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Identifying language minority students' support needs in a diverse classroom environment: A case study of ESL high school students' perceptions of their experiences as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

________________________________________________________________________

Name of Subject

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Subject Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Investigator Date
Consent For Audio Taping

Child’s/Research Subject Name:

Title of the Project: **Identifying language minority students’ support needs in a diverse classroom environment: A case study of ESL high school students’ perceptions of their experiences.**

ID# Number:

Birth date:=

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews (of my child).

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the recording be stopped. I also understand that my name or (my child’s name) will not be revealed to anyone and that the audio-cassettes will be kept confidential. Tapes are filed by number only and stored in a locked cabinet.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and the viewing of materials will be for professional use only.

__________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian               Date

Or

__________________________________________  ________________
Research Subject                            Date

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
My name is Joanne Kruczek and I am a graduate student at the University of Windsor’s Faculty of Education. I am writing to request your approval for a research study that I plan to conduct in order to meet the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

My proposed study is entitled Identifying language minority students’ support needs in a diverse classroom environment: A case study of ESL high school students’ perceptions of their experiences. The purpose of this case study is to identify English Second Language (ESL) students’ needs, learning preferences and perceptions of their current programs. In the continued search for a better way of meeting the needs of ESL students, I believe that the study will also identify (through the views of the students), potentially more innovative ways of teaching ESL students. Moreover, the study will be of significant benefit to teachers and administrators since it may provide alternative approaches such as transitional programs rather than traditional mainstreaming or pull out classes. Most importantly, insights gleamed from the study will facilitate immigrant students’ successful integration into the public education system and ultimately, into the Canadian society.

There are no known risks associated with this study and participants may withdraw at any time. If you have any questions or concerns about the proposed study, I can be reached at home (1-519-974-3263), or by e-mail at: kruczek@uwindsor.ca. My supervisor, Dr. Benedicta Egbo can also be reached at 519-253-3000 ext. 3839.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this request.

Sincerely,

Joanne Kruczek
APPENDIX I

Letter of Permission to Superintendent of Education

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

XXXXXXXXXXX
Superintendent
XXXXXXXXXXXXX School Board
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear X XXXXXXX,

My name is Joanne Kruczak and I am a graduate student at the University of Windsor’s Faculty of Education. I am writing to request your approval for a research study that I plan to conduct in order to meet the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

My proposed study is entitled as Identifying language minority students’ support needs in a diverse classroom environment: A case study of ESL high school students’ perceptions of their experiences.

The general purpose and relevance of this study are to identify ESL students’ support needs, learning preferences and perceptions of their current programs. In the continued search for a better way of meeting the needs of ESL students, I believe that this study will also identify (through the views of the students), potentially more innovative ways of teaching ESL students. Moreover, the study will be of significant benefit to teachers and administrators since it may provide alternative approaches such as transitional programs rather than traditional mainstreaming or pull out classes. Most importantly, insights gleamed from the study will facilitate immigrant students’ successful integration into the public education system and ultimately, into the Canadian society.

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The main criterion for participant selection in this study will be ESL students who demonstrate an interest in participating in the study and sharing their high school learning experiences. The researcher "enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know them, be known and trusted by them, and systematically keeps a record of what is heard and observed" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The participants will be drawn among students from various levels and grades in the ESL program at XXXX XXXX high school.

The primary source of the data in this study will be open-ended focus group interviews conducted among the participants. It will be important to begin the fieldwork as an overt participant observer in order to gain the respect and trust from potential participants for the interviews. The first week will consist of observation and immersion in the participants' environment in order to establish a positive rapport with the ESL students and to later conduct the 20-30 minute interviews, which will form the primary source of data for the study.

The secondary source of data in this study will be individual interviews and a focus group discussion between teachers and the researcher. The interview questions will focus on teacher perceptions of ESL students, their support needs, and overall integration into the school environment. The individual interviews should not take more than 20 minutes, while the one focus group discussion interview should take a maximum of 30 minutes. I will not require any special school facilities, other than access to observe the classrooms and possibly a separate room, such as the cafeteria, in order to conduct the interviews.

The demographic profile of student participants will include the following variables: gender, home country, grade level, number of years in Canada, first language, age, and current level of proficiency in English. The profile of the teacher participants will highlight the following: age, sex, nationality, native/ minority language(s), educational background and teaching experience. The typical class size is 15-18 ESL students. There will be two higher language proficiency classes asked to participate. A total of 41 ESL students and 7 ESL teachers will participate in the study.

Data Analysis will be done in two phases. The first phase will be ongoing while in the field and will focus on the overall classroom environment. The researcher will observe and take notes in specific ESL classes, actively participate by circulating the class and voluntarily helping ESL students with their work. This will establish a positive rapport with the ESL students and teachers, gain the trust of the participants and familiarize them with the researcher in order for the required comfort level to exist prior to the interview/ group discussion processes. The second phase will be the actual interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews along with observations, field notes, and memos will be extensively analyzed and reflected upon in the conclusive stage of the second phase.
I will contact the principal of XXXXXXXX XXXXXX high school, XXXXXXXXXXX in order to explain the purpose and methodology of this study and to ask permission to conduct my research at her facility. Once I have received permission, the appropriate ESL teachers will receive a research package, which will include a Teacher Information Letter, a Teacher Consent Form, and the 2 interview sample questions (individual and group), discussed previously. The Teacher Information Letter will outline the purpose and methodology of the study, the rights of participants to withdraw, and issues of confidentiality. The Teacher Consent Letter will indicate their “implied consent” for participation in this study. The ESL students in selected classes will also receive a Letter of Information and a Student Consent Form for those students who are over 18 years of age. For those students who are under 18 years of age, a Parent Letter of Information and a Parent Consent Form will be given to them in a package to bring home to their parents to sign. All students will also receive an Assent Form explaining in simpler language the relevance and purpose of the study as well as their rights to participate and/or withdraw. All participants in this study will also receive an Audio Consent Form in order to allow the interviews to be audio taped for future analysis.

Once all of the Consent Forms are signed and collected, I will then pursue the second phase of the study, the interview process. The interviews will be conducted anonymously and will not require individual teachers and students to identify themselves, their principal, or school.

Significance of the Study

As Canada becomes an increasingly pluralistic society, the changing demographic landscape has had a tremendous impact upon schools as a variety of cultures and language speakers are currently present in today’s classrooms. Given the increasing number of students who enter schools speaking a native language other than English (or French in Quebec) addressing the unique condition and support needs of language minority students should be a matter of high priority for all educators. Although the ethnic, cultural, and in particular, linguistic composition of students in Canadian schools have changed significantly, there remains a need for finding ways of integrating the academic and social needs of ESL students into the curriculum and teaching practices.

Overall, there is a lack of Canadian studies on this topic as the bulk of the existing studies is based on the U.S. context. However, two significant Canadian studies stand out. Foscolos (2000) focused on the perceptions of Asian Pacific ESL students regarding their high school learning experiences. This study captured the voice of students who have been under-represented in the in discourses related to language, immigration and education. The findings of the study include the following: increased time positively affects the level of English Language Proficiency (ELP) as well as success in high school; effective instructional support is needed to develop ELP and socio-cultural
factors impact on relationships with peers and teachers, such as feelings of isolation, frustration, and minimal interaction was a common perception.

Bird (1998) conducted a similar study, except this time the focus was on ESL students' needs as well as on the teaching practices of ESL teachers. This ethnographic research centred on how ESL students increase their confidence and English language skills when the extra academic and language assistance they often require is provided to them along with the mainstream students in support groups. Additionally, this study addressed the key role of classroom environment in enhancing ESL students' participation in curricular activities and the importance of building a support network to include ESL students in the overall school system. Also, this study revealed that teachers are critical promoters of ESL students' cultural and academic integration into the school. Finally, this study explored issues concerning clarity of instruction for ESL students and making the content instruction more comprehensible for them.

Ontario has one of the largest growing immigrant populations in the world. Three million people in Ontario called themselves immigrants in 2001. In the Greater Toronto Area, 40 percent of residents reported to Statistics Canada that that they spoke a first language other than English. Toronto is made up of more immigrants (44 percent) than Los Angeles (41 percent), Vancouver and New York City (36 percent) (Duffy, 2003). Specifically, in XXXXXXX and its surrounding area, the ethnically growing population is now at 304,955. XXXXXXX is the fourth largest diverse city in Canada, per capita where 4.3% of its population are speakers of French, and the rest 67,210 (22%) people break down into the following minority languages: Italian 12,335 (18%), Arabic 8,600 (13%), Chinese (includes Cantonese, Mandarin, Hake, and others) 4,865 (7.2%), Polish 3,950 (5.9%), Spanish 2,525 (3.8%), German 2,510 (3.7%), Tagalong (Filipino) 1,820 (2.7%), Punjabi 1,665 (2.4%), Vietnamese 1,525 (2.3%), Greek 1,455 (2.2%), Ukrainian 1,155 (1.7%), Portuguese 575 (0.9%), Dutch 490 (0.7%), and other non-official languages 23,740 (35%). Evidently, there exists the necessity of linguistic diversity research in XXXXXXX and its surrounding area.

As mentioned in the general purpose, the proposed study will benefit educators, administrators, parents, and most importantly, students. This study is also significant to all of the participants in educational reform and school governance who institute and implement educational reform initiatives in order to implement change successfully at the elementary and high school level. District school board trustees, senior administration, school based administration, and teachers may benefit from a greater understanding of minority students' support needs in a diverse classroom environment, and successful and lasting implementation of educational reform initiatives and/or programs. Further, the XXXXXXX XXXXXXX XXXX School Board may benefit form this study as the results may be useful for recruitment and training of future educational leaders who understand the process of language learning and the needs of linguistically diverse students in the XXXXXXX and surrounding area.
Additionally, this study may be beneficial to principals, as it might help them to understand the benefits of teacher effectiveness with language minority students. Parents may also benefit from this study as it may provide valuable insights of the successful integration of their children into the Canadian school curricula. Finally, teachers might benefit by addressing their own responsibilities and implications in order to provide better education for all students, which will ultimately benefit student achievement. This is the theoretical goal of educational reform and program reconstruction.

Participation will be voluntary and confidentiality will be ensured. There are no known risks associated with this study and participants may withdraw at any time. The Teacher, Student, and Parent Information Letters, various Consent Forms, as well as an introductory Letter to the Principal, and copies of the sample interview questions are enclosed.

I have submitted this research proposal to the Ethics Committee at the University of Windsor and was approved under the condition of a Clearance Letter from the Windsor-Essex Catholic School Board. I would like to perform the data collection phase of this research project in the month of May. If you have any questions or concerns about the proposed study, I can be reached at home (519-974-3263), or my e-mail at: kruczek@uwindsor.ca. My supervisor, Dr. Benedicta Egbo can also be reached at 519-253-3000 ext. 3839.

I will submit my findings to your office upon completion of the study. I will also share my findings with participating teachers and the principal.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this request.

Sincerely,

Joanne Kruczek
APPENDIX J

Sample Interview Questions for ESL Students

High School Impressions

Are you enjoying high school? What do you like about it? What don’t you like about it?

Regular Classes

Tell me about your regular classes you are taking. What is it like to be a student in these classes? What helps you learn in these classes?

Peer Support

How do you get along with other students in your classes?

ESL Classes/Program

Tell me about your ESL program. How have your ESL classes helped you with mainstream classes? If you could design a better ESL program, what would it look like?

Satisfaction with high school

Are you satisfied with your overall high school learning experiences? Why? What helps you learn and do well in your classes? What do you find frustrating about high school? What have you accomplished in school so far that you are most proud of? What has been the most challenging part of high school? What do you think you will do after high school?

General

How do you feel about Canada?
APPENDIX K

Sample Interview Questions for ESL Teachers

AGE:
SEX:
NATIONALITY:
NATIVE LANGUAGE/ MINORITY LANGUAGES:
BACKGROUND EDUCATION:
TEACHING EXPERIENCE:
ESL QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING:

Attitude and Approach

What is your overall attitude of ESL students?
What are your future ambitions for ESL students?
What is your methodological approach to ESL students?
What have you noticed about ESL students' learning styles and attitudes, compared to those students in mainstream classes?

Mainstream Classes

How have the ESL classes helped students integrate to mainstream classes?
Do you believe that ESL students feel isolated or do you think they get along with other students in mainstream classes?
What do you think about their social integration into the school environment?

ESL Classes

What are the advantages of your school's ESL Program?
If you could design a better ESL program, what would it look like?
How do you feel about 18 ESL students in a class? What about 10 or less?
How do you feel about ESL students constantly "repeating" certain courses (ESL or other classes)?
Satisfaction with high school

What do you think of the overall high school experiences of ESL students?

What do you think helps ESL students do well in your classes?

What do you think is frustrating for them in your classes as well as in the high school experience?

What do you think their greatest accomplishments are?

What do you think their greatest challenges are?

What do you think of their future after high school?
VITA AUCTORIS

Joanne Kruczek was born in Krosno, Poland in 1980. She moved to Windsor, Ontario in 1989 and was also once an ESL student in the Canadian elementary school system. She graduated from St. Joseph’s High School in 1999 and then studied English and French literature at the University of Windsor. Following, she moved to Quebec and received a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, with a Specialization in TESL and a Minor in Langue Francaise from Concordia University, Montreal in 2005. Shortly afterwards, she began the Master’s of Education Program in Administrative Studies at the University of Windsor in the fall of 2005, and plans to graduate this fall, 2007.